



Make a joyful noise

Heather Johnston explains her discovery of 'Belleplates' and suggests ideas for a music workshop using them – or other instruments.

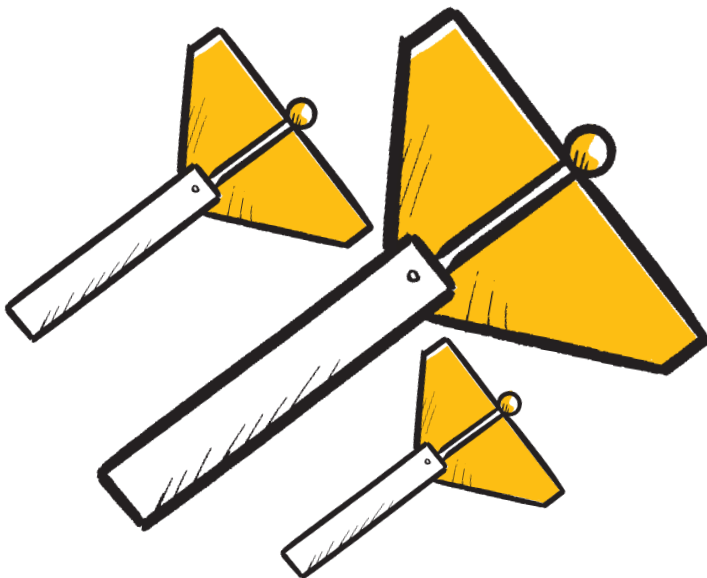
Discovering Belleplates

Seven years ago, when my Mum died, we asked for donations, in lieu of flowers, to our local church, Baldock United Reformed Church in Hertfordshire. We then had to think about what to buy as a fitting memorial. She loved music and played the piano until arthritis made this impossible. She also loved to hear the children singing and making any kind of music in church. A while later I was leading a workshop on working with young people and one of the other workshops that day was on the use of 'Belleplates'. Some of our own young people went along to this and they were so enthusiastic about it that we decided to purchase a set in memory of my Mum.

We asked someone who was familiar with using Belleplates to run a workshop for us. The children picked up how to use them very quickly and thoroughly enjoyed this novel way of making music. The smaller children used just one and the older ones used one in each hand. We were soon using them to accompany singing in church and 'making a joyful noise'. We have since moved away from the area but keep in touch with friends in Baldock URC and they tell me that the Belleplates are still being regularly used.

Belleplates are rung like hand bells, but they are lighter, easier to use and considerably cheaper. They consist of a metal plate with a handle. Attached to the metal plate by a spring is a striker. When you shake the Belleplate with a single firm action, a clear musical bell-like note is made by the striker hitting the plate. Each 'Belleplate' has its musical note engraved on it and there is a wide range of octaves available – one and a half and two being the most popular. You can start with a smaller set and buy add-ons to convert up to a larger one.

You do not need to be able to read music to play the Belleplates, but you need someone who can write the words of the songs on a flipchart with the names of the corresponding Belleplates above them. Ideally this would be someone who plays the piano and who would be willing to come along to a Saturday workshop (or a weekday in the school holidays). They would work with the children in learning to play the Belleplates and also play the piano for some of the other activities for the children.



Music workshop

If you are unable to use Belleplates, you could substitute xylophones, chime bars, and other percussion instruments, which you may be able to borrow from a local school. Some larger libraries also have musical instruments for loan. Alternatively, spend some time making simple percussion instruments (see July 17, *Be creative – Sound story* on page 13 for some ideas.) The ideas below are for quite a long session – adapt them for your own group. The aim is to encourage careful listening, and skills in rhythm and tunes.

1) In advance

Prepare carefully in advance, ensuring that you have all the necessary information and procedures to fulfil your church's child protection policy.

2) Welcome

Welcome the children as they arrive, and register them. Have some activities ready for the first few minutes – to a background of live or taped music.

- If you have any very young children, have some colouring sheets available – these can be simple drawings of objects relating to the songs, or large dot to dot musical notes for them to join up.
- Make anagram cards of the names of familiar songs or nursery rhymes. Put these around the room for the children to solve.
- Make the names of some famous composers into a word search with enough copies for each child.

3) Listening activities

Divide the children into teams.

- Play on a piano, or use a recording of, a selection of tunes, some secular and some well-known ones from your church. Each team needs a scribe to write its answers. Swap sheets and mark at the end.
- Have a selection of names of tunes written on cards. One person picks a card and claps the rhythm for their team to guess. If they cannot guess it goes on offer to other team for a bonus.
- Play the game as above but this time hum the tunes for the children to guess.
- Clap a simple rhythm for the children to clap back to you. If they are doing well, make the rhythms increasingly difficult.

4) Action songs

- Sing 'Heads, shoulders, knees and toes' with the actions. Keep repeating the song, each time missing out singing the word for one body part, and just pointing to it. When you have sung it through singing only the 'and's, go through once more singing everything very fast.
- This song is sung to the tune of 'John Brown's body'.
Little Peter Rabbit had a fly upon his nose (*Mime 'rabbit's ears', then flap arms for the 'fly', and point to nose.*) Repeat twice.
And he flicked it and he flopped it and the fly flew away (*flick nose and flap arms*).
Clever, clever Peter Rabbit
Repeat twice.
And he flicked it and he flopped it and the fly flew away.
Repeat all above, omitting word 'nose' but keeping action and rhythm. Continue repeating and omitting an extra word each time as in the previous song.
- If you can borrow a karaoke machine, older children would have fun practising singing and rhythm.



5) Using instruments

- The music leader shows on a flipchart a prepared song/chorus with a simple melody line that is well known to the children. The other leaders demonstrate the Belleplates, xylophones, or chime bars by playing the song. You may have had one or two practices, but not too many, because the whole point is that this is a way to make music fairly easily.
- Show the children carefully how to use the Belleplates or other instruments, and then they practise a simple tune. If you have a large group, some start by singing along. When the first group is doing well with the tune, swap the groups over. If possible, record the music to show the group how good they sound.



6) Musical games

- Play old favourites such as musical statues and musical chairs. If you have recorded the instrumental music from the last activity, you could use it for the games.
- Parachute game. This requires a lot of space either inside or outside. If you have, or can borrow, a large parachute, all stand in a circle holding on to the parachute. You will need several leaders at intervals between the children. Go round the circle naming the children as musical notes in threes or fours depending on the number of children. For example, C, G, F#, A (repeat round circle until back to beginning). Gripping the parachute, everyone moves it up and down rhythmically. When you have a good pace going, a leader calls out one of the groups, such as F# and all the children in that group dive under the parachute and come out again on the opposite side. Repeat for as long as you like.
- If you do not have a parachute, then use the same idea with children sitting in a circle and changing places when the leader in the middle calls out two musical notes. You can also call out 'The Whole Song' and everyone gets up and changes places. The person in the middle also goes for a seat and whoever doesn't get a seat takes the place of the person in the middle.

7) Break for refreshments or lunch

8) Instrumental Bible story

Choose a Bible story to tell in your own words, or read it from a children's Bible. It needs to have some drama about it. For example:

- from the Old Testament – the creation story, Jacob's ladder or Noah and the flood
- from the New Testament – Jesus calms the storm, Jesus walks on water, the good Samaritan, Jesus enters Jerusalem.

Divide the children into two groups: actors and musicians. The music leader plus helpers work with one group to use Belleplates, xylophones, chime bars or general percussion instruments to make an appropriate musical accompaniment to the narration of the story. Other leaders work with the acting group to mime the story to a narration. Bring the two groups together. Some of the mime may well turn into dance when put together with the accompaniment. You can use simple props and costumes.

9) Explore 'Make a joyful noise'

These ideas are for the older children or young people.

There are six Psalms that use the phrase 'Make a joyful noise' in the Authorised Version of the Bible. They are numbers 66, 81, 89, 95, 98 and 100. New translations range from 'shout with joy' to 'acclaim the Lord'. I like the 'make a joyful noise' idea best. It implies that we do not have to be expert musicians, just enthusiastic in our singing and praising of God. It also particularly sums up the way our children and young people like to worship God.

- Have several different translations of the Bible for the group to look up these Psalms, find the relevant verses and see how the versions differ. Which versions do they prefer?
- Look at a selection of hymn books and find any hymns based on the Psalms you have been looking at. (See the Resources section at the end for some suggestions. You may be able to find more.)
- Invite them to choose one of the psalm songs to play and sing. If some of your group can play instruments, use these and/or use home-made or borrowed percussion ones.
- Choreograph one of the Psalms if you have any in the group who are keen on dance, possibly making and using coloured streamers.
- Devise your own musical accompaniment to all or part of a Psalm being read aloud. This could take the form of alternating verses with music and would work well as a processional song.
- Write your own Psalm, including in it the words 'make a joyful noise' and compose a tune or musical accompaniment/dance to go with it.
- Alternatively, write a Psalm by putting your own words to an existing tune. Remember that if this tune is copyrighted and it is to be reproduced in any form you would need permission for this, unless you choose one that does not have copyright limitations such as an old traditional tune.
- Here are two psalms that I have written to old traditional tunes, which you may like to use.
The first one, based on Psalm 81.1-3 would be a good one for older children to teach the young ones. In the first part, they could march up and down, playing instruments. In the second part they could stand and mime playing the instruments mentioned.

We will make a joyful noise (1)

Tune Traditional: The Grand Old Duke of York
words © Heather Johnston

We will make a joyful noise.
We'll make a joyful noise.
We'll sing and dance to praise the Lord
and make a joyful noise.

We'll play the recorder,
the flute and violin,
the keyboard and a set of drums,
trumpet and tambourine.

Repeat as often as you like and after the last time of singing all shout
PRAISE THE LORD

We will make a joyful noise (2) from Psalm 98.1-7

Tune Traditional: Michael row the boat ashore
words © Heather Johnston

We will make a joyful noise, hallelujah.
We will make a joyful noise, halle-lu-u-jah.

For our God is a great God, hallelujah,
ruling over all the world, halle-lu-u-jah.

From deep caves beneath our feet, hallelujah,
to the highest mountain peak, halle-lu-u-jah.

He is Lord of every land, hallelujah,
rolling seas and shifting sand, halle-lu-u-jah.

Our God made us everyone, hallelujah.
We will worship and kneel down, halle-lu-u-jah.

We belong to God always, hallelujah.
He will care for us each day, halle-lu-u-jah.
Repeat verse 1

10) Closing worship:

The aim of this section is to bring together some of the things you have been working on and offer them to God as worship.

Stand in a circle with instruments and streamers (if you made them) in the middle. Explain that you are going to say a prayer, then when we get to the words at the end that say – ‘Please help us to use all of ourselves to worship you and make a joyful noise’ – the leaders will give out the instruments. If there are not enough to go round, the rest can be singers and dancers. Then everyone will shout out the response ‘PRAISE THE LORD’ and play or sing or dance. Use one of the tunes you have worked on. Then maybe the older ones can show the work they have done on the psalms.

Lord Jesus, today we have been learning how to make a joyful noise.
Thank you for our hands that have played instruments, *(wave hands in air)*.
Thank you for our ears that have listened to the sounds, *(put fingers behind ears)*.
Thank you for our voices that have sung to the music, *(sing first line of chosen song)*.
Thank you for the whole of our bodies that have mimed to the music and played games, *(jump up and down)*.



Thank you for our brains that have worked things out, *(point to head)*.
Please help us to use all of ourselves to worship you and make a joyful noise.
PRAISE THE LORD! Amen! *(All play, sing and dance.)*

Follow up

Try to arrange for the children to take part in worship with one of the songs or psalms or the Bible story with musical accompaniment as soon as possible, preferably the following Sunday.

You will probably find that older members of the congregation will also be interested in using Belleplates/percussion instruments and this could lead to great possibilities for all-age workshops with the children teaching the adults. This could be extended into the community by going along to local senior citizens’ residential homes. A good way to start this would be a carol singing session accompanied by Belleplates/percussion or other instruments.

Resources

For more information on Belleplates contact Maurice & Sheila Davies, 57 Orchard Way, London Road, Ashford, Middlesex TW15 3AU
Tel/Fax: 01784 255961, or see their very helpful web site
www.belleplates.com

Selina Hastings (ed.), *The Children’s Illustrated Bible*, Dorling Kindersley, 1994, ISBN 075135113X.

Big Blue Planet, Stainer & Bell ISBN 0852498276. This book is very useful for simple songs.

Some hymns/songs based on ‘Make a joyful noise Psalms’:

- I will enter his gates with thanksgiving in my heart *(MP)*
- I’m gonna click, click, click *(TS)*
- Joy in the Lord *(Sounds of Living Water)*
- Joy to the world *(Hymns Old & New)*
- Whilte *(Reioice & Sing)*



Make a joyful noise

Sound story

Tell the story using sounds – with borrowed or homemade percussion instruments. Homemade ones can include:

- Yogurt pot shakers – two pots taped together with rice or dried beans inside.
- Two wooden spoons of different sizes to beat against each other.
- A metal spoon, held by a piece of string tied around the hands. Beat it with another metal spoon.
- Sandpaper stuck onto small blocks of wood, for rubbing together.
- Plastic bottles to shake, with a little water sealed inside.