Marching Music & Activities for Kids

Instrumental songs for marching
“September March”
“March March”

Songs to sing
“March Quickly”
“The Ants Go Marching”
“Midnight March”

For the Teacher
- Download the PDF document
- Enjoy the music, activity instructions and teaching strategies
  Donna uses in her music classroom
PLUS Donna has created some adaptations for classrooms in which movement is restricted.
- Access audio tracks of two of Donna’s marches for use with students
- Share vocal scores with your students
- Use the YouTube links to hear (and see) some famous marches
- Watch the instructional videos
  • Marching Activities with Donna – Marching into March
  • September March (with teaching tips)
  • September March (demo)

Donna Rhodenizer
Music education specialist
Composer
Performer
RECORDING ARTIST

In addition to writing her own songs and activities for her students, during 35+ years in her elementary music classroom, Donna has collected many songs to share with students.
See Donna’s Loud/soft video playlist in her Facebook page: Elementary Music with Donna

View Donna’s Blog with PDF download and audio tracks:
https://donnaandandy.com/marching-music-activities-for-preschool-and-elementary-age-students/
www.donnaandandy.com (for Donna’s original songs and classroom activities)
TEACHING STRATEGIES

Give them a reason to listen
Marches are a great style of music to motivate students to move and respond to music. When planning student activities “Giving them a reason to listen” informs teaching practices and helps teachers create engaging lessons. The infectious beat of a march makes it an excellent choice for entering music. As the students enter the classroom, they immediately have a reason to listen and the opportunity to respond. Marches seem to elicit a response from even the youngest of students. Without saying anything except, “Follow me” the teacher can march the students into the classroom configuration of choice. A circle is the easiest to do, with the students following the teacher. However, if rows are desired, stop the first child by holding up your hand like a marching band director and give the signal to start a new row. All this can be accomplished without speaking; music is playing, students are engaged and having fun, and the music class has only just begun! You have completely avoided the “kerfluffle” of students entering and trying to find their spots. There is no chatting and no wasted time and it is a musical way to enter. I love this.

Simple marches provide many learning opportunities for your students
Elementary-aged students in music classrooms and vocal studios will enjoy responding to the beat of a lively March. There are also opportunities to use simple marches to present and develop other music elements:

- Keeping the beat
- Marching and changing between loud and soft
- Moving and responding with the phrases of the song
- Adding “silent beat keeping” movements to the march selection of the day
- Using facial expression that change with each phrase

Loud and Soft
Marches are great for introducing and practicing loud and soft. As the students are following me, I say, “Loud!” and then start to stamp my feet (still with the beat). Students need almost no encouragement to happily follow suit. After a few beats I will over dramatically say, “Sh!” with a large gesture (to assist with a visual cue) and students will march quietly. With lots of switches,
the students love to feel the beat of the march and they can internalize loud and soft at the same time.

To add variety to your loud and soft marching options, introduce other movements such as “tight rope walking,” swimming (front crawl works best), jumping, etc. There are samples of these in the video Marching into Music Class “September March.”

**Keeping the beat while remaining seated/in a spot**

For classrooms where movement is restricted, students may keep the march beat by “patsching” (hands on the thighs) or using a variety of motions that keep the beat. I particularly like to do actions that are physical, but with no sound. “Silent beat keeping” can include tapping the shoulders, hot potato (one fist on top of the other), sticking out your tongue (how awesome is that?!) winking, bending the knees with hands on the hips, tapping a toe, waddling, nodding yes or no, etc.

Adding facial gestures to the music is also great fun. This is one of my favourites! Coordinate the facial expressions with the phrases of the song, switching what you are doing every 4 or 8 beats. Whatever I am doing the students imitate: smiling, frowning, sleepy, grumpy, afraid, surprised, etc. This is a great way for the students to practice facial expressions in a fun environment and creates experience upon which you can draw later when asking students to sing expressively.

Join me as I demonstrate how I use “September March” in my music classroom using some of the activities listed above.

There is also a demo video with just the march (without written annotations).

**Marches**

Marches are written in 2/4, 4/4 and 6/8 (which still feels like 2 beats with each beat subdivided into 3). They will all have a bit of a different feel. When you are looking for a march, \( \dot{J} = 120 \) will feel the most natural (it is 2 beats per second). Lots of aerobic movement songs are set at this tempo! I recommend marching as you listen and see how it feels to you. If it doesn’t feel ‘good’ to you, go on to another tune. There are LOTS from which to choose.

Military bands are a great source for a quality performance if you are searching for versions of marches on YouTube. Once the students are familiar with some of the marches, I would encourage you to show the students a video of a band playing so they can identify the instruments they have been hearing.
When I am not creating my own marches, I have a few favourites that I would recommend: John Philip Sousa is an American composer well known for writing marches:

**The Liberty Bell** (performed by “The President’s Own” U.S. Marine Band)

**Semper Fidelis** (performed by “The President’s Own” U.S. Marine Band)

Note: Both “The Liberty Bell” and “Semper Fidelis” videos begin with some historical background, which may be interesting for students in upper elementary grades. The march starts at 45 seconds.

**Washington Post March** (performed by The United States Army Field Band, directed by 1st Lt. Alexandra Borza)

**Stars and Stripes Forever** Overall I find this march a bit fast, but it is possibly the most familiar Sousa march, so I have included it here for reference. If you are listening only, go to YouTube to find a solid version. The two versions (links below) are good for viewing purposes.

**Stars and Stripes Forever** (performed by Luther College Concert Band, Joan deAlbuquerque, conductor)

This band of college-age students is not quite as “polished” as a military band, but it is motivating for students to see younger people playing in a band. Three piccolo players come to the front of stage for their solo part and the brass players assemble at the front of the stage for a feature as well.

**Stars and Stripes Forever** (performed by Dallas Winds, directed by Jeff Gershman)

Just for fun, this version features three piccolo players during the main part of the piece. The piece appears to end but then the band begins to play again and when the piccolo solo part arrives, 94 piccolo players stand up and play along!

Pipe and Drum bands are also fantastic for stepping to the beat (Note: Marching Pipe and Drum bands seem to be consistently slower than 120 beats per minute so it feels and looks more like ‘purposeful’ walking than marching, although some pipe tunes can be a quicker pace). I like to search for piping tunes that are in the range of \( \dot{J} = 96 \) so there is no confusion re: whether the corresponding movement should be marching, or moving using a deliberate walking step.

**Three Bagpipe Tunes** for “marching” and/or watching:

**The Massed Pipes and Drums, Edinburgh Military Tattoo – BBC** (medley - titles unknown)

**Scotland the Brave** (performed by Massed pipes & drums during Gordon Castle Highland Games 2019) Scotland the Brave is possibly one of the most famous bagpipe songs.

**Kelly, The Wearing of the Green** (performed by Brian Boru Irish Pipe Band)
SONGS TO SING

Sing songs that include marching to extend the marching theme.
  March Quickly (traditional)
  The Ants Go Marching (traditional)
  Midnight March / La marche de minuit (Donna Rhodenizer)

**March Quickly**
Talk about marching
  What does it look like?
  What does it feel like?
  Who marches?
  Have you ever seen anyone march?
Sing the first verse of the song (or chant it).
Move your feet with the beat of the song.
  Move ONLY when singing the words, “Left, right, left right”
  Move on all the phrases except for the phrase that starts with the word “listen.”
  When you hear the word “listen,” freeze in your spot.
Sing the second verse of the song (or chant it) (Try whispering the words.)
  Tiptoe march for the whole song.
  Move your feet and sing the words, “left, right, left, right” only inside your head.

**The Ants Go Marching**
This is a fun camp song about marching ants.

Add some dynamics to your song in the “boom” sections.
Add a crescendo or a diminuendo, or alternate for each verse.
Add instruments whenever you sing specific selected words:
  hurrah – finger cymbal
  one, two, three, four – claves
  rain – rain stick

This song is in a minor key.
  Minor keys often sound sad, but this song is a jaunty march so it may not seem so sad.
March Quickly

March quickly, march quickly, up and down the street.

Left, right, left, right, listen to the beat.

March quickly, march quickly, up and down the street.

Left, right, left, right, hear the marching feet.

March softly, march softly, up and down the street.

Left, right, left, right, with a quiet beat.

March softly, march softly, up and down the street.

Left, right, left, right, people are asleep! Sh!
The Ants Go Marching

Traditional
Adapted by Donna Rhodenizer

The ants go marching one by one, hurrah! Hurrah! The ants go marching one by one, hurrah! Hurrah!

The little one stopped to have some fun and they all went marching down to the ground to get out of the rain. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom.

The ants go marching two by two hurrah! Hurrah! The ants go marching two by two hurrah! Hurrah!

The little one stopped to wave, "Yoo hoo" and they all went marching down to the ground to get out of the rain. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom,
boom, boom. The ants go marching three by three, hurrah! Hurrah! The ants go marching three by three, hurrah! Hurrah! The ants go marching three by three the little one laughed and yelled, "yippee" and they all went marching down to the ground to get out of the rain. Boom, boom, boom, boom. Boom, boom, boom. The ants go marching four by four hurrah! Hurrah! The ants go marching four by four hurrah! Hurrah! The ants go marching four by four the little one stopped and said, "No more!" and they all went marching down to the ground to get out of the rain. Boom, boom, boom, boom boom, boom, boom, boom.
Midnight March / La marche de minuit

This composition by Donna Rhodenizer was created for a concert performance at a French Immersion school. The song works equally well in English – or use a combination of both French and English. The students love dramatizing the toy wooden soldiers as they sleep, wake up, march and then return to sleep. Although it is not a Christmas piece, it does fit in well with a Christmas theme.

As a French-language song, the text uses simple vocabulary that supports counting (counting backward is much more difficult. We had to use our fingers to help with that!), directions: left and right, and early vocabulary words such as regardez, petits, la nuit, and beaucoup.

The instrumental section in the middle extends the length of the song without adding additional text to be learned.

Costume options
Option 1: Have the students wear tops in solid primary colours (red, blue and yellow) and pin two strips of paper in an “x” across the chest.
Option 2: Make a large loop of paper and drape over one shoulder creating a diagonal stripe. **HINT:** Instead of cutting strips of paper (who has time for that?!) use a roll of adding machine paper. Roll out the desired length and pin on each student with a straight pin wherever they need to be fastened. No cutting required.

For an additional effect, add white gloves and use a blacklight. (Only in my dreams! My concerts were on portable risers set up in the gym, under gym lights with no option for blacklights or any other great lighting effects.)

“Choreography” / presentation
At the beginning of the song, all students are standing but slumped over “sleeping.”
Use a guiro or cabasa to simulate the sound of a key winding up the soldiers.
Students slowly straighten up until they are standing in a normal, upright position (over 8 beats).
Use a triangle or other ringing sound to ring the clock chimes as the students sing from 1-12.
Students sing the verse without actions until the lyrics: left, right / gauche, droite
Students step and stiffly move their hands like a wooden soldier.

Continue movement through instrumental section.
Stand still to re-sing the opening lyrics (bar 33-40)
Use fingers to show the counting down of the numbers 12-1.
On the last note, use a wood block or have the students make a clicking noise as they turn off and slump over, asleep again.
La marche de minuit (Midnight March)

Words by Donna Rhodenizer
Composer unknown
Music adapted and arranged by Donna Rhodenizer
French editing by Gisèle Caron

Students start bent over and "asleep". Slowly stand upright as the cabasa or guiro "winds them up"
Add triangle "chiming" with each number

Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, One, two, three, four, five, six,
sept, huit, neuf, dix, onze, douze, minuit minuit.
seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Midnight, midnight.

À minuit les petits soldats se réveillent et marchent
It is midnight, clocks are calling, toys are waking up to

March and move hands like a stiff wooden soldier, one motion per word

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left, right, left, right, left, right.

Instrumental melody with students marching in their spots

It is midnight, clocks are calling, toys are waking up to

dans la nuit. Regardez les petits soldats, have some fun. Look at all the wooden soldiers,

Marching through the toy shop one by one. Twelve, eleven,

ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three,

Students slump over and go back to sleep

two, one. All done. All done. (Use a woodblock or similar instrument to make the sound of the soldiers being switched "off" as they go back to sleep)
Donna Rhodenizer has over 35 years of experience as an elementary music classroom specialist. Her passion for music is shared with the students who enthusiastically join her for music exploration and education in their elementary music classes. Thousands of children have enjoyed singing, marching, playing recorders and handbells, presenting legendary concerts for delighted audiences and becoming informed musicians with Donna’s classroom activities. Former students are eager to greet her in the grocery store to ask, “Do you remember me?” (which she often does thanks to writing their names repeatedly on report cards over the years!) Donna loves sharing new marches with her students and has made it known that the Pipe and drum bands are her favourite part of a parade. Everyone is encouraged to march to the beat of their own drum!

Donna has over 400 videos on her Facebook page: Elementary Music with Donna
Video topics include repertoire, teaching songs, classroom management, teaching strategies, scope and sequence of teaching young children to find a singing voice, camp songs, high and low, snow songs, concert planning and staging, and MORE!

Several of Donna’s songs are published in the Royal Conservatory of Music Graded Voice Series published by Frederick Harris.

Donna’s most recent publishing collaboration is with Nikki Loney and FULL VOICE Music https://www.thefullvoice.com/ where her repertoire for young singers is published as single song download packages with printed music (vocal and full score) audio backing tracks and teaching strategies. Print and online licenses are included in the package. Find Donna’s music in the “New Songs” tab:

Songs for Young Singers AND Winter Songs for Kids

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