



Break It Down! Teacher's Guide

Performed by:

Lawler + Fadoul

Zara Lawler, flute, alto flute, piccolo

Paul J. Fadoul, marimba, vibraphone, drum set

Written by:

Lawler + Fadoul

with Gary Race

Directed by:

Gary Race

Teacher's Guide by:

Lawler + Fadoul

with Virginia Zimmerman



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Dear Teacher,

Lawler + Fadoul have been doing children's performances for many years, and the single most frequently asked question after our shows is "How did you get that marimba here?" It was that question, and the realization that both children and adults are fascinated to know that not just the marimba, but all of our instruments, come apart into many pieces and parts, that was the genesis of **Break It Down!** We wanted to show that not only do our instruments come apart into pieces, music does too.

And both music and musical instruments "work" even when they are taken apart, and are even more interesting when they get put back together.

If you don't have time to study this guide, don't worry--**Break It Down!** is designed to be a self-contained experience, meaning that no prior musical knowledge is required. If you do have time, however, this Teacher's Guide will give you some effective discussion points and activities for both pre- and post-performance. The performance is geared for pre-K through 5th grade; please feel free to adapt these activities to your students' age group as appropriate.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me: lawler@lawlerandfadoul.com

Looking forward to having you at the show!

Zara Lawler



Pre-Performance

Discussion:

These discussion points build on students' prior knowledge and experience, priming the pump for the performance. Ask students:

- What performances have they been to?
- Do any play instruments?
- What feelings or images/pictures come to mind as you listen to music?

Video preview:

This activity will give students a little foretaste of the performance, sparking their curiosity, and setting them up to pay attention. Have the students watch this short Lawler + Fadoul video of George Gershwin's *Prelude Number 1*, which is a piece that will be featured in **Break It Down!**

https://youtu.be/9a6_-5xEbXQ

The instruments featured are flute and marimba. Ask the students:

- What feelings or images/pictures come to mind as you listen to this piece of music?
- What do they wonder about the flute and the marimba? What would they like to know?
- What did they notice about the way the instruments and performers related to each other?
 - Did it seem like one or the other was more important?
 - Was one higher or lower than the other?
 - Was one louder or softer than the other?
 - Did they ever play by themselves or were they always playing together?
 - How did they sound the same? How did they sound different?

Get to Know the Performers:

Share our kid-friendly bios with your class, included as the last page of this Teacher Guide. For older students, let them read the bios. For younger students, read them aloud to the class.



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Tell/Write Your Own Musical Bio

After sharing Lawler + Fadoul's bios, have students tell/write their own musical bios. Use some suggestions such as:

- Have you had any similar experiences with musical instruments themselves: exploring/trying an instrument, lessons, band?
- Does anyone in your family play an instrument? ("My sister plays the flute.")
- Do you like to sing? Does anyone in your family sing? ("I remember my mom singing lullabies to me.")
- Have you ever been in a musical performance? Where did it take place? ("I like to march to the music in 4th of July parades.")

Post Performance

Discussion:

In **Break It Down!** what did you notice about

- The instruments
 - What instruments can you remember?
 - How did they make sound?
 - How many parts did they have?
 - Could you play the parts by themselves?
- The story ("A Tale of Two Toys in the Trash")
 - In what ways did the music contribute to the story?
 - How did the instruments themselves help tell the story?
 - What would you add to the story if you were telling it?
- The Performers:
 - How did the performers use their bodies?
 - What specifically did they use to make the sounds (breath, hands, mouth, fingers, etc.)
 - What were the effects of using different parts of the body to create sound, melody, rhythm? Which of these are YOU able to reproduce?
- Images
 - Close your eyes for a moment. Recall the images that came into your head as you first started listening to the music.
 - Did any of these mind pictures change as you kept on listening?
 - Were the pictures in your head the same in the beginning as at the end?
- Does the music/performance raise any questions for you?
- What else do you want to ask/know from this event?



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Exploring Melody:

In **Break It Down!** we learned that a *melody* is the part of the song that you can sing without words.

- 1) Review:
 - a) Sing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star with the class.
 - b) Sing the melody of Twinkle on "la," as we did in the performance.
That is the melody of Twinkle.
- 2) Extend this new knowledge to other melodies. Follow the same plan as with Twinkle. First have the class sing the song with words, and then sing the melody just using "la."
 - a) Some examples for younger children:
 - i) The Itsy Bitsy Spider
 - ii) Mary Had a Little Lamb
 - b) For older students:
 - i) Star Spangled Banner
 - ii) The Hokey Pokey
 - iii) Happy Birthday
- 3) Follow the same procedure with melodies suggested by students.

Exploring Rhythm:

In **Break It Down!** we learned that if you take melody and harmony away from music, what you have left is *rhythm*.

Review:

1. Sing Mary Had a Little Lamb with the class.
2. Sing Mary Had a Little Lamb with the class while everyone claps along with every syllable.
3. Have everyone sing the song silently (in their heads) while clapping every syllable: *that is the rhythm of Mary Had a Little Lamb.*

Extend this new knowledge to other rhythms: Repeat the above steps with songs of your choice or the students' choice. Some songs that will work well:

1. Jingle Bells
2. Happy Birthday
3. The Itsy Bitsy Spider



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Variation: Melody and Rhythm Back-to-Back

The following exercise can be done with any song that is well known to your students, as in the examples above.

1. Sing the song, with words.
2. Sing the song using only "la," and remind the students this is the *melody* of the song.
3. Sing the melody using only "la," while the students clap to every "la."
4. Sing the song silently (in their heads) while clapping to every imagined "la." This is the *rhythm*.

Make an instrument out of trash/found objects

Percussion

In **Break It Down!**, we learned that a percussion instrument is anything you hit with a stick, a mallet, or your hand. ...so potential percussion instruments are literally everywhere. Good candidates for homemade drums include

- buckets
- coffee cans
- pots and pans

A pencil makes a good mallet: have the students strike their trash percussion instruments with the eraser for a nice sound.

Then play the rhythm of the songs from rhythm review, by tapping them on the trash percussion while singing them silently.

Note: It can be challenging to manage a classroom of percussionists! Establish a signal for stop, and a rest position in which instruments are on the ground (not in hands) and mallets are down.

Flute

A trash flute can be easily made by using any empty bottle. Students should be instructed to blow across the top of the bottle. This can be a bit challenging at first-it takes more air than you might think! Since bottle flutes only play one or two pitches, you can't really play a whole melody on a single bottle. Instead, have students try blowing the rhythm of the songs from the rhythm review.

Note: As with percussion in the classroom, it is vital that you establish a stop signal, and a rest position in which the instrument is away from the mouth.



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Trash Instrument Videos

For further information, we recommend these videos about making instruments from trash and household objects:

Homemade Packing Tape Drum: <https://youtu.be/-COHNyFTOnc>

Homemade Musical Instrument Assignment: <https://youtu.be/fLvTvH9BZ04>

Parts & Wholes

A central idea of **Break It Down!** is that music and musical instruments can come apart and be put back together again. The parts function each on their own, but are even more interesting and beautiful when they are all together. This idea of parts and wholes, of individuals and groups, of unity and diversity, is a rich topic for discussion and activity.

For older students, discussion of parts and wholes will be fruitful if you explore other things that function similarly. Some examples:

- Pizza (crust, cheese, sauce, pepperoni are all nice on their own, and pizza is an organic whole)
- Sports (how individual members of a team work to create something bigger than themselves)

For younger students, remind them of activities they have experienced in which pieces come together to make a whole. For example:

- Puzzles
- Rainbows
- Circle activities

Video of **Break It Down!**

The entirety of the show is available on YouTube as a play list. Each section of the show is a separate video, so you can review melody and rhythm, or re-watch the Tale of Two Toys in the Trash, or play highlights for your students.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLdDT7w02FNdDWCK-O7H0qD0qMxei8WMd3>



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LAWLER + FADOUL

ZARA LAWLER, flutist:

I began playing the flute when I was in fifth grade—that was the year we started band at my school in Nyack, New York. I was the last kid in my class to be able to make a sound on my instrument! I remember that when I first got a sound on it, I was so excited I ran around the whole neighborhood yelling, “I got a sound on the flute! I got a sound on the flute!” And even though it was pretty much right then that I knew I wanted to be a flutist when I grew up, I also wanted to be lots of other things too: an archeologist, a firefighter, or a gymnast. One of my favorite things about being a professional musician is all the cool places that you get to visit. I spent three years living in Hong Kong, where I played in the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, and also got to spend summers in Germany, Canada, and in Vermont and Massachusetts. From 2000-2008, I played with a group called Tales & Scales, and got to travel all over the U.S. with the troupe. (In Tales & Scales is where I met Paul). Now I live in New York, and have fun traveling to Washington, DC to work with Paul. Other things that I love to do are folk and modern dancing and playing the banjo.

PAUL FADOUL, percussionist:

I started playing percussion when I was nine years old, after a few years of piano lessons. I used to take chop-sticks home from restaurants, lay all of my Dr. Seuss books out on the floor, and drum on them. When my mom heard me do that, she knew that I needed to start percussion lessons. After that, I split my time up between school work, percussion, and baseball. In high school, music took over and I stopped playing baseball, but I'm still a big New York Mets fan. Now, being a musician is my job, and from 2003 to 2005, I got to perform all over the country in a group called Tales & Scales. I spend a lot of my time teaching kids music in different ways. I teach and write the music for marching band drumlines, and I also teach piano to students as young as 5 years old and perform for students all over the Washington DC area. When I'm not doing music, I enjoy spending time with my cat and playing tennis.

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