

## A VERY DOABLE song...

On occasion, a student will ask that awful question, « Could we do a song, Miss? » Then, yours truly hems and haws, and mumbles vague and incomprehensible (to the student) words about modern music, pedagogical interest, and the student generally wanders off, trailing his disappointment behind him...

At this point, one wonders, a) Where on EARTH a "suitable song" can be found, and more worryingly, b) What on EARTH could be done with it, and all this leads to the final, excruciating and all-important question of c) What on EARTH is meant by "Doing A Song"???

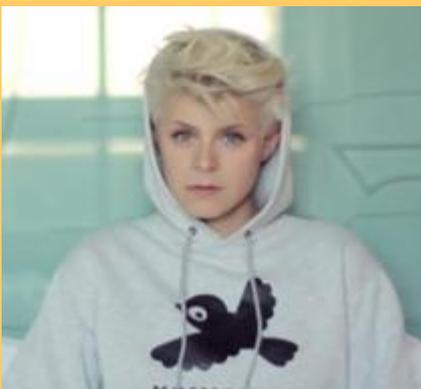
If we think honestly about the matter of songs in the English class, what is generally done? On occasion, if the words make any sense, if the lyrics are (more or less) grammatically correct, or (but this dates back to the 60s and 70s really) if there is a Message (moral, political or otherwise) it is possible to venture onto the slippery terrain of Oral Comprehension... made more complicated by the interference of the music of course... One also often comes across the printed version of the song in a textbook - and here a Written Comprehension is generally recommended... But is either of these two what the naïve and hopeful student is looking for? Hardly. He probably has no idea who Bob Dylan was, or what was meant by *Blowing in the Wind*. He is undoubtedly disappointed in (at best surprised by) the teacher's choice of *Stir It Up*, for it dates back to *Before He Was Born*... no, what he was hoping for was something that he listens to, that he can relate to.

So the teacher desirous of enthusing the student-who-wants-to-DO-a-song, trolls the net for a piece of Modern Music that can be used in class - still not really having any idea about what the actual Doing will entail. And occasionally, something miraculous happens.

A few months ago, a young lady (with, in the author's opinion, little voice, and not much talent for dancing either - although, truth be told, personally I must admit to having even less of both - but then I don't go showing off on stage and on internet, do I ?), anyway, a young lady named Robyn put out a song named Call Your Girlfriend.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nv644ipg2Ss](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nv644ipg2Ss)

The lyrics are, well, teeney-boppery and difficult to understand, even to my native ears. The tune is sort of catchy but the unpleasant (to my aging, if native, ears) electronic beeps and bops detract from the melody. In short, after fewer than 10 seconds, I would personally hit the back button and resume my search for the ideal song.



At this point in my ramblings, I must back up. BEFORE finding the original version of this song, I had heard something else... something that could be "done", and enjoyed (by teachers and students alike) in a classroom situation. Something that was not only pleasant for the ears, but that had my feet tapping, my head moving, my fingers snapping ; something that made me want to try to DO a song in class...

This something is a group of Three Swedish Women (well, girls actually), named Erato, who sing A Cappella. They are part of a girl's group from Uppsala and they accompany their delightful singing by clapping, picking up and putting down and tapping on home-made percussion instruments that look suspiciously like empty (and hopefully clean) margarine tubs. It is simple, and easy to imitate. Positively inspirational. (Not only that, the girls look as though they are having a whale of a time!)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNE9bUa2D0c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNE9bUa2D0c)



All this brings back memories of summer camp activities - "Clap, clap, tap, tap, tap, clap, slide over. Clap side, up down, up bang bang!" - the CUP GAME, that almost all children learn to do at some point!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Grb1oa72kmk>

This link explains how to play the cup game.

And oh, the pedagogical possibilities !! No musical interference here - Oral Comprehension is doable, to say the least ! However, one cannot find depth, or message in the lyrics. Which means one should maybe take things a good step further, and in a different direction. In a phonological direction : the rhythm, the beat could be used to help the student (who speaks a syllabic language) to imitate the stressed (and sometimes stressful) English language! One could envisage requesting that one music colleague participate in a multi-subject mini project. One might even venture as far as asking the students to transform one of their own favorite songs into an A-cappella, margarine tub performance. (It is probably a good idea to teach the students the cup game first, to practice with some simple but rhythmic sentences before going full hog and Doing a whole song...)

The mind boggles!!!

Quickly, back to class, we are going to DO a song...