

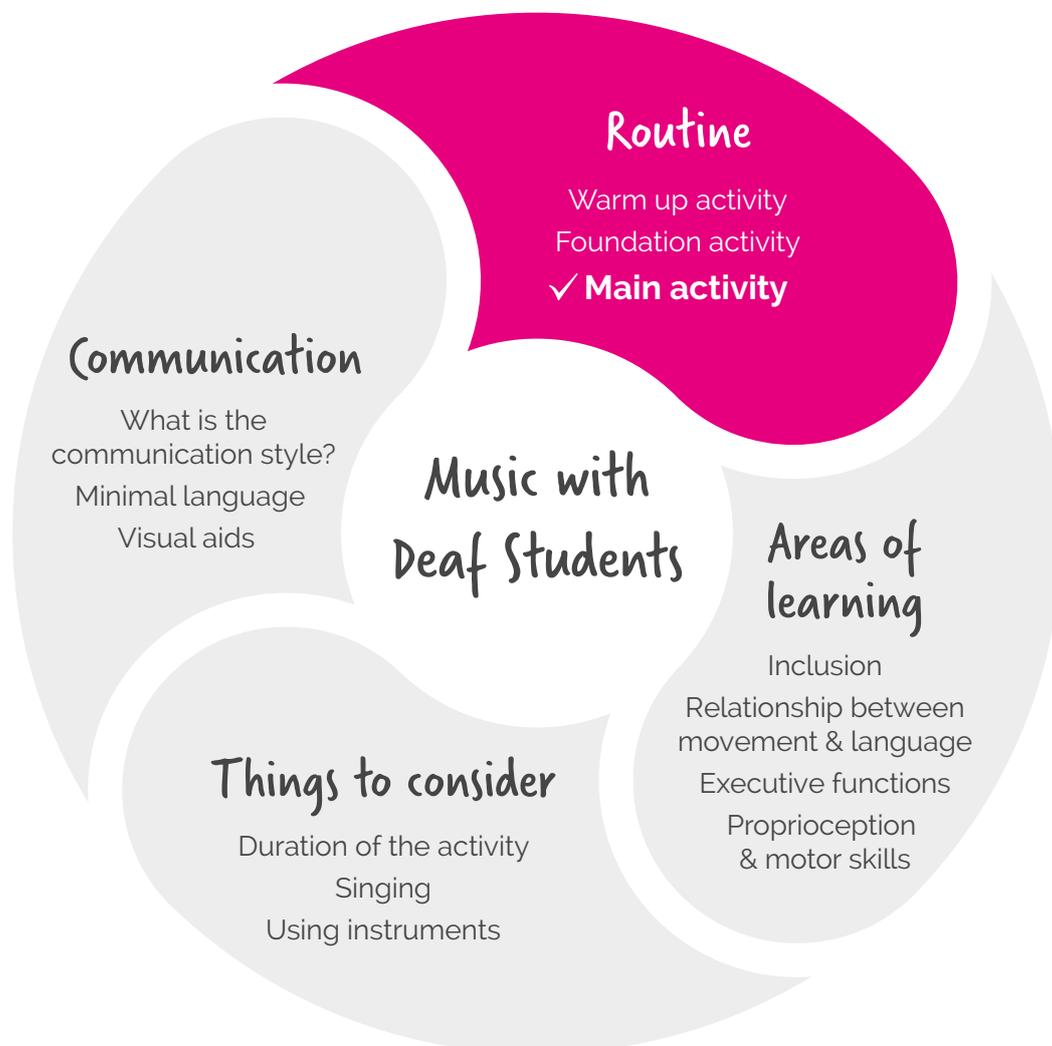
Sounding Out

A toolkit for music practitioners
working with deaf students

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Simama Kaa



Simama Kaa



MAIN ACTIVITY

Simama Kaa is a very popular song in music education due to its rhythmic syllables in Swahili, catchy melody and repetitive rhythm. There are many versions of the song on YouTube, with different movements and body percussion sequences to accompany to the piece.

In this Toolkit we're going to describe how we used the song with groups of deaf children both in primary and secondary school.

It is widely accepted that deaf people can access music more easily if sound is associated with tactile or visual perception. We planned our sessions with this in mind: during games, musical activities and in performance. We observed that the use of visual cues to instruct sound production engaged students most effectively.

Body movement as a descriptive gesture of sound was the most successful. With movement, students discovered a tool for understanding musical concepts: the body became the centre of the musical activity, and gestures added meaning to the different musical elements (pulse, volume, tempo, timbre etc.).

OPTION A:

This activity has been used with children with varying levels of deafness and additional needs (ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia).

Multimodal and intermodal musical game:

- Voice
- Body percussion
- Instruments



OPTION B:

This activity has been used with a group of profoundly deaf secondary school children with severe learning difficulties, developmental disabilities, emotional and behavioural disorders (ADHD) and physical impairment.

The children were either verbal or non verbal, using sign language to support their communication.

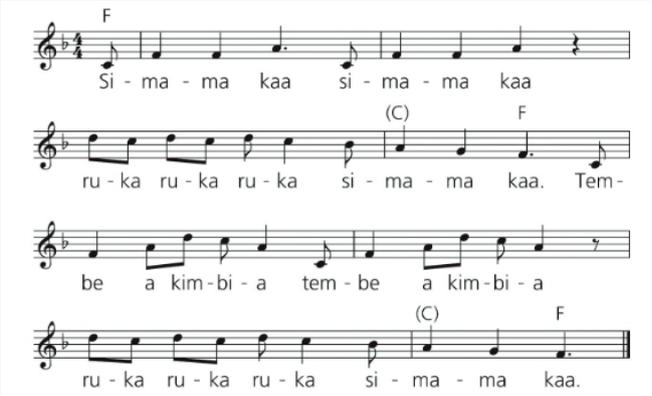
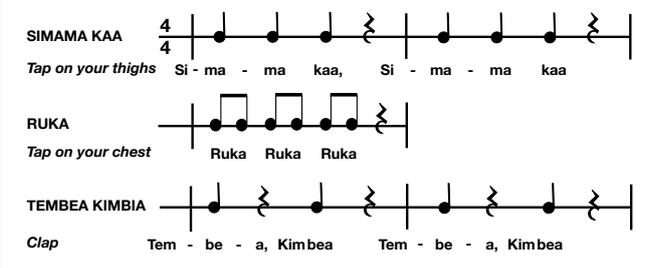
- Parachute
- Voice

in a circle
in small groups

Simama Kaa



Option A - Step 1. Body Percussion

STEP	DESCRIPTION	MUSIC
1a	Describe the rhythm with body percussion	<p>Working in unison. Coordination between voice and movements. Dynamics. Tempo.</p> <p>The lyrics contain five words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simama = stand up • kaa = sit down • ruka = jump • tembea = walk • kimbia = run  <p>The song is composed of 3 different parts: assign the same movement/rhythm to each part and don't change it through the song.</p> 

VIDEO REFERENCE: Simama Kaa: Step 1

1b	The teacher introduces the musical form/structure of the piece: ABA	Repeat the song three times: first with body percussion and singing (A), then without singing (B) and finally the third time with singing again (A).
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IMPORTANT

Use the signs to conduct the song (Soundpainting or your own gestures). If you want to make any changes during the activity make sure that everyone is looking at you before signing the modification (e.g. going slower/faster; play with or without voice etc; stopping and starting again etc.).

Part B is important because it gives children the chance to internalise the song and test their knowledge without the teacher's support.

Keep mouthing the lyrics in part B, as this will help the group to stay in time until they are confident with the song.

Option A - Step 2. Play 'Cat And Mouse' - Musical Game

 VIDEO REFERENCE: Simama Kaa: Step 2

STEP	DESCRIPTION	MUSIC
2a	<p>PART 1: The teacher asks for one volunteer to play the 'mouse'. The other players form a circle sitting or standing, making sure to not leave any spaces. The player who is the 'mouse' stands on the periphery, waiting for the song to start before walking around the circle.</p> <p>The 'mouse' needs to choose which of his friends in the circle will become the 'cat' by touching the person's head at the end of the song.*</p> <p>PART 2: Then, the person who has been chosen by the 'mouse' becomes the 'cat' and chases after the 'mouse', following the same direction around the circle.</p> <p>The aim of the 'mouse' is to sit in the circle, stealing the place of the 'cat' who will try to catch them before they get there.</p> <p>If the 'mouse' is caught, the 'cat' can go back to their place and the 'mouse' will try again with another friend.</p>	<p>PART 1: All of the players sing <i>Simama Kaa</i>, and do body percussion movements.</p> <p>The 'mouse' could face some difficulties in coordinating rhythmical hand movement while stomping in time around the circle. If this occurs, the player can stop moving their hands and just walk in time.</p> <p>PART 2: The teacher starts improvising a melody in a quicker tempo, encouraging the children to clap or tap on their thighs faster to the beat.</p>

IMPORTANT

*PART 1: Students who are playing the 'mouse' with severe or profound deafness, rely on their movements and on the visual cues of the game to understand when Part 1 is finished. This is why it is important to always continue the body percussion during Part 1 and keep mouthing the lyrics.

Step 3. Introduce the Instruments

VIDEO REFERENCE: Simama Kaa: Step 3

STEP	DESCRIPTION	MUSIC
3a	The teacher assigns instruments and forms groups according to the musical level of the students.	<p>Call and respond.</p> <p><i>Simama Kaa</i> and <i>Tembea Kimbia's</i> part is easier than <i>Ruka ruka ruka</i>.*</p> <p>Children beat the rhythm to <i>Simama Kaa</i> using their instruments. This is transferring the rhythm from body percussion to instruments.</p> <p>One group plays the <i>Simama Kaa</i> rhythm, and the second group plays <i>Ruka ruka ruka</i> (call and response style). Both groups play <i>Tembea Kimbia</i> in unison.</p> <p>According to their instrumental levels, the children play drums, small percussion, xylophones, piano, violin etc. (<i>Image 2</i>).</p>

IMPORTANT

We used Rhythm Card notation to write the parts down (*Image 1*).

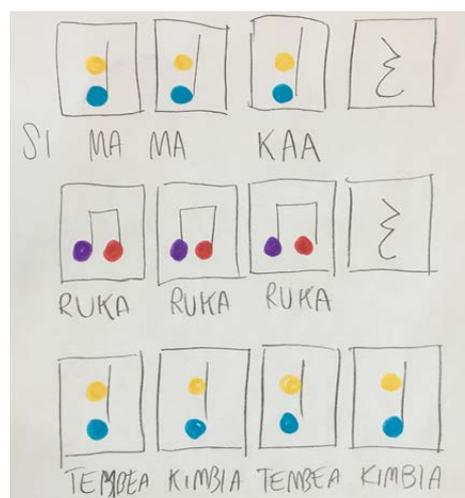


IMAGE 1

Drawings on big board - Piano part based on the Rhythm Cards in a primary school group



IMAGE 2

Drawings on big board - Instruments assigned according to the lyrics

Simama Kaa



Option B - Step 1. Parachute

VIDEO REFERENCE: Simama Kaa: Step 1

STEP	DESCRIPTION	MUSIC
1a	<p>The teacher writes down the lyrics to teach the song to the students.</p> <p>Use the parachute as a visual cue to reinforce the rhythm of the song.</p>	<p>Rhythm. Singing. Coordination between movement and voice.</p> <p>The movements always have to be accompanied by the voice.</p> <p>The song is composed of 3 different parts: the teacher assigns a rhythmic movement to each part.</p>

WHAT WE OBSERVED

After two or three repetitions, one of the children naturally changed the words from *Simama Kaa - Ruka ruka ruka* into *Mama cat - running running running*, giving a different meaning to the syllables but keeping the same rhythm.



The teacher embraced the new idea as they also found that starting the song on the beat instead of the upbeat was much easier for the children.

The interpreter immediately signed the new words to the rest of the group. After this, one of the profoundly deaf students, who previously struggled to engage with the activity, appeared to enjoy the game a lot more and was able to access the song as she could sign along with the lyrics. This also helped her rhythmic skills.

Eventually the song was simplified by removing *Tembea Kimbia*.

IMPORTANT

This is an activity that you can use with deaf students who have severe learning difficulties. It's fun, colourful, based on tactile perception, rich in visual cues, and allows deaf children to enjoy music as a game.

The movement of the parachute follows syllabic rhythm of the lyrics which can be perceived easily by holding the parachutes. If there is more than one teacher, they might want to sit between the children to play the rhythm more precisely.

Step 1. Parachute-1

STEP	DESCRIPTION	MUSIC
1b	Use the parachute as a visual cue to support the dynamics of the song.	<p>Dynamics. Rhythm. Singing. Coordination between movement and voice.</p> <p>Keep moving the parachute with the same rhythm.</p> <p><u>Dynamics</u> <i>Soft</i> - moving the parachute down <i>Loud</i> - moving the parachute up <i>Crescendo</i> - moving the parachute slowly towards the ceiling <i>Diminuendo</i> - moving the parachute slowly towards the floor</p>

WHAT WE OBSERVED

This session allowed us to understand that an approach based on multisensory experience is much more satisfying and effective for deaf students, especially the ones with severe and profound deafness.

Step 2. Conducting the Rest of the Group

 VIDEO REFERENCE: Simama Kaa: Step 2

STEP	DESCRIPTION	MUSIC
2	<p>First, the teacher goes under the parachute and demonstrates the dynamics of the song by moving the parachute up and down, also changing the volume of their voice.</p> <p>Then, everybody can have a go under the parachute to conduct the rest of the group.</p>	<p>Dynamics. Rhythm. Singing. Coordination between movement and voice.</p> <p>Keep moving the parachute with the same rhythm.</p> <p><u>Dynamics</u> <i>Soft</i> - moving the parachute down <i>Loud</i> - moving the parachute up <i>Crescendo</i> - moving the parachute slowly towards the ceiling <i>Diminuendo</i> - moving the parachute slowly towards the floor</p>

Simama Kaa



WHAT WE OBSERVED

Children really love to go under the parachute and to engage with the movement.

This step was really important during the session because it helped the students to remain connected with the activity.

IMPORTANT

To help the children understand the changes in voice, volume and dynamics, you can use a microphone connected to a big speaker that they can put their hands on. They will immediately feel the vibrations of the sound and feel the difference between loud / soft, crescendo / diminuendo - as well as long / short.



Rhythm Cards for Mama Cat