



Wendell the Narwhal

An Introduction to Conducting

Suggested Grades: K-2

Polina Mann

National Core Arts Standards

- #1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- #2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Objectives

- Learn about and practice conducting.

Materials

Book: **Wendell the Narwhal** by Emily Dove
Narwhal Puppet

Recording: **Morning** from Peer Gynt Suite

What Does a Conductor Do?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_6cTbyWP88



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I PreK-8th grade music at the St. Rita School in Hamden, CT. This is my 8th year in a private school setting and love it! I am certified in music, theatre and technology. I also work as a church music director on the weekends and started the Instagram page Grants for Music Teachers. You can find me on Instagram, Pinterest, and Facebook.

Book Summary:

Conducting is a complex skill to teach. This puppet and the accompanying book make it easier for young learners to grasp and be engaged in this process. I discovered the narwhal puppet through Folkmanis puppets and then discovered the book *Wendell the Narwhal* at my local library. Putting the two of them together makes it the perfect way to introduce conducting while having a tangible “conducting baton” in the form of a puppet.

In the story, Wendell thinks that he cannot play with the rest of the ocean creatures until one day, he tells everyone to be quiet using his tusk and discovers his talent: conducting. Follow along with Wendell’s adventure as he goes from an outsider to directing his own underwater orchestra.

Suggested Teaching Process:

Wendell the Narwhal

- Read *Wendell the Narwhal*
- Describe the role of a conductor.
 - A conductor selects the music to be played by the orchestra.
 - A conductor stands on a large podium in front of the orchestra with the music in front of them.
 - A conductor guides the orchestra in playing the music at the correct time and tempo.
- Use the narwhal puppet to help narrate the story.
Hint: I often have it on one hand while turning pages with the other so I can talk to and about Wendell while having the puppet on my hand.

What Does a Conductor Do?

- Watch the movie, **What Does a Conductor Do?**
- Practice conducting with the movie.
- Lead a Discussion about conducting.





- Do we conduct in the same pattern or different patterns? *Different patterns*
- What do you think makes these patterns change? *They change to reflect how the music was written, i.e., different time signatures.*
- Why do we need a conductor? *To keep the musicians playing together.*
- Do you think orchestras always had conductors? *No, before the Classical period, it was the first violinist who would lead the orchestra.*
- What are the four families of instruments? *Strings, brass, woodwinds, and percussion.*

Morning from the Suite of Peer Gynt

- Conduct with the recording.
- Demonstrate a 2-beat conducting pattern
- For fun – use the narwhal puppet as the baton.

References:

Dove, E. (2018). *Wendell the Narwhal*. Scholastic Inc.

YourClassical MPR. (2014). Youtube Class Notes: What Does a Conductor Do? Retrieved November 14, 2021, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_6cTbyWP88.

