



Walton Arts Center

Performance Guide



The Swingles

Photo Credit: Nedim Nazerali

For more than half a century The Swingles have pushed the boundaries of vocal music. The seven young singers who make up today's London-based group, are driven by the same innovative spirit that has defined the five-time Grammy® winners since the 1960s. Launched to fame by the album Jazz Sebastian Bach, their repertoire has grown to include a huge variety of music. The Swingles have released more than 50 recordings, winning five Grammy® awards and appearing on numerous film and TV soundtracks including every choral director's favorite, Glee.

Ideas for Curriculum Connections:

Arkansas Learning Standards: Fine Arts Standards
Vocal Music: P.4.BVMIV.3; P.4.BVMIII.5; P.6.BVMI.3;
R.9.BVMIII.1; CN.10.BVMI.1; CN.11.BVMI.2; CN.11.
BVMI.3. Music Appreciation: P.4.MA.1; P.5.MA.1;
P.6.MA.2; R.7.MA.3; R.9.MA.1. Fine Arts Standards
Music: P.6.5.3; CRA.SL.1; R.7.5.3, R.7.6.3, R.7.7.3,
R.7.8.3; R.8.6.1; R.8.5.1, R.8.6.1; R.8.7.1, R.8.8.1;
R.9.5.1, R.9.6.1, R.9.7.1, R.9.8.1; CN.10.6.1, CN.10.7.1,
CN.10.8.1; Cn.11.6.1, CN.11.7.1, CN.11.8.1, CN.11.6.2,
CN.11.7.2, CN.11.8.2; P.6.MA.2; R.9.MA.1



The Swingles in 1964. Photo Credit: Hugo van Gelderen / Anefo - Nationaal Archief

The Swingles

For more than half a century, The Swingles have pushed the boundaries of vocal music. The seven young singers that make up today's London-based group are driven by the same innovative spirit that has defined the five-time Grammy® winners since they first made waves in the 1960s. At a time when a cappella music is more popular than ever, The Swingles are recognized as masters of their craft.

In 1963, American-born Ward Swingle first assembled a group of Parisian session singers to sing Bach's keyboard music. The resulting album, *Jazz Sebastian Bach*, launched the Swingle Singers to fame. Since then, they have won five Grammy® awards and made more than 50 recordings, with a repertoire that has grown to include a huge variety of music, including pop, jazz, folk, contemporary classical and new original songs. Recent releases include *Folklore*, inspired by traditional music from around the world; 50th anniversary album *Deep End*; and holiday collection *Yule Songs vol. II*.

The Swingles have appeared on numerous film and TV soundtracks, including *Sex and the City*, *Wedding Crashers*, *Grey's Anatomy* and *Glee*. In 2017, they co-wrote and performed a song for the end credits of Alexander Payne's film *Downsizing*. Their prolific output of music videos has also earned them millions of views online and new audiences around the world.

The Swingles are:

Federica Basile
Joanna Goldsmith-Eteson
Imogen Parry
Oliver Griffiths
Jon Smith
Kevin Fox
Edward Randell

Aca-History

While it is impossible to pin down an exact beginning for the history of a capella, it is possible to track popular forms of a capella over time. "Capella" in Italian means chapel and was added to music to denote singing in the style of the chapel. This style is best reflected in religious Gregorian chants, a popular musical style from the middle ages to the Renaissance. Gregorian chants gave rise to madrigals, which were secular songs performed unaccompanied by 2-8 singers. However, as the baroque period arrived, it became more popular to perform with instruments. It wasn't until the 1930s when Barbershop (male quartet) and Sweet Adelines (female quartet) singing style was developed that a capella singing once again became a popular form. After barbershop, a capella seemed to lapse in popularity once again. Until recently, starting in the late 2000s and early 2010s, a capella renditions and mash-ups became popular through TV shows like *Glee*, performance groups like Pentatonix, and movies like *Pitch Perfect*. Today, a capella means to sing unaccompanied and continues to thrive.

Learning Activities

Improve Listening Skills

Inspired by Julian Treasure's TedTalk "5 Ways to Listen Better."

1. Appreciate Mundane Sounds
2. Distinguish between Multiple Sounds
3. Be silent 3 minutes every day
4. Practice different listening styles (engaged, excited, appreciative, etc.)
5. RASA
 - Respect - be attentive
 - Appreciate - consider the song's message in terms of sound and words
 - Summarize - main point or feeling of a song
 - Ask - clarify what you find confusing

Check out [The Swingles on YouTube!](#)

- Pick a couple of songs they posted on YouTube
- Ask your students to apply listening concepts from the previous activity. Remind them they do not have to talk in order to practice these skills, they can simply think about the message.
- Play the song a couple of times, first time ask your students to just listen and try to distinguish between the voices. On the second listen, ask them to take notes about what they hear.

Aca-History Activity

Pick songs representative of the different popular styles of a capella throughout history.

Ask students to analyze the songs as they listen by taking notes on the feeling conveyed in the music and how the music creates that feeling.

As a class, discuss how popular a capella music has changed over time by comparing and contrasting the songs based on the students' notes.



Photo Credit: Nedim Nazerali

Write a Reivew of the Show

Practice critical thinking and evaluaion skills.

Ask students to write a review of the performance. In preparation, ask students about their favorite films and TV shows. Based on their answers show students examples of professional reviews written about their favorite media.

Then, discuss what students remember from the performance. This discussion is meant to help students generate ideas about what they might write about. As such, you can use the Discuss and Reflect questions to guide the conversation.

When writing their reviews, ask students to consider the elements of music and performance.

Make sure that they include:

- A brief description of the ensemble and theatre space to convey the mood of the show.
- What they learned about a capella
- What they liked/disliked about the show
- How many stars (up to five) they would rate the show
- If they would recommend it to other schools, friends and family.



Photo credit: Nedim Nazerali (left), The Swingles (right)

Reflect and Assess

Ask the following questions. Record the group's answers on the board and discuss.

- What did you notice about the show?
- How does The Swingles' musical style compare to your favorite music?
- How many of their songs had you heard before?
- What was your favorite song they performed? Why?
- What did you like most about the performance?
- What emotions did you feel as you listened to the various songs?
- How did the performance make you feel, overall?
- What moment in the performance do you remember most?
- Could you distinguish between the voices? How did they sound different yet blend together to make a song?

Learn More Online

Official website/social media of The Swingles

Website: www.theswingles.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/theswingles

YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/swinglesingers

Patreon: www.patreon.com/theswingles

Twitter/Instagram: @swinglesingers

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www.waltonartscenter.org

Walton Arts Center

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Walton Arts Center

Learning & Engagement

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