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SPARK in Education

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: Technology-Enabled Art
Subject: Pamela Z
Discipline: Music/Theatre

Vocal artist Pamela Z rehearses for a performance.
Still image from SPARK story, February 2004.

SECTION I - OVERVIEW

EPISODE THEME
Technology-Enabled Art

SUBJECT
Pamela Z

GRADE RANGES
K-12 & Post-secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS
Visual Arts & Language Arts

OBJECTIVE
To introduce students to the concept of performance art through the vocal works of Pamela Z.

STORY SYNOPSIS
Pamela Z is a San Francisco-based composer/performer and audio artist who works primarily with voice, live electronic processing, and sampling technology, including the BodySynth™, a device that allows her to manipulate sound with physical gesture. In "Technology Enabled Art," Spark trails Z as she creates and performs Voci, a layered, multi-media performance that explores and celebrates her primary instrument, the voice.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
Group oral discussion, review and analysis
Teacher-guided instruction
Hands-on individual projects
Hands-on group projects

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES
To introduce students to performance art
To provide context for the understanding of performance art in relation to other forms of art
To inspire students to explore vocal and performance art experiences

EQUIPMENT NEEDED
TV and SPARK story "Pamela Z" about performance artist Pamela Z on DVD or VHS and appropriate player
Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sounds card, printer
Cassette player, CD player, or computer audio program

MATERIALS NEEDED
- Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers
- Pencils, pens, and paper

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED
Bodily-Kinesthetic - control of one's own body, control in handling objects
Interpersonal - awareness of others' feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Intrapersonal - awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Spatial - ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems
Logical-Mathematical - ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, think logically

See more information on Multiple Intelligences at www.kqed.org/spark/education.

SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Pamela Z is a composer, performer, sound artist, and vocalist who creates works using her voice, assisted by sampling technology and electronic processing. In "Technology Enabled Art," Spark trails Z as she creates and performs Voci, a layered, multi-media performance that explores and celebrates her primary instrument, the voice.

Since she began getting the attention of audiences and critics in the early 90s, Z has gained a reputation for recordings and performances of layered aural compositions that effortlessly combine operatic bel canto and experimental extended vocal techniques with percussion and spoken word. Z records these sounds, then triggers and manipulates her samples with the help of a series of devices. Running a program called MAX/MSP, a graphical environment for music, audio, and multimedia, on her laptop computer, she is able to trigger and manipulate sampled sounds through simple gestures, thanks to a MIDI device called a BodySynth™.

Voci explores the sonic, cultural, physical and artistic worlds of the voice, celebrates the broad range of colors in the singing and speaking voices, and examines the scientific and cultural associations of the voice and its many metaphors. In addition to Pamela Z's performance and live electronic processing, Voci features vivid, tall video projections designed by filmmakers Jeanne Finley and John Muse as well as a stunning lighting design by Elaine Buckholtz.

Pamela Z has toured extensively throughout the United States, Europe, and Japan, performing in numerous festivals. She has composed, recorded and performed original scores for choreographers and for film and video artists and has done vocal work for other composers. Her multimedia performance works have been included in exhibitions in

San Francisco, New York and Germany, and range in scale from small concerts in galleries to large-scale multimedia orchestrations in proscenium halls and flexible black-box venues.

Pamela Z performing at ODC Theatre, San Francisco.
Still image from Spark story, May 2003.

THE BIG PICTURE

Historically, the origin of performance art is difficult to pinpoint to any one artist or time period. Some art historians identify Futurist art movement member Hugo Ball with inspiring the genre when he read his non-sensical "Sound Poem" to a live audience in 1916. Others say that the genre was born in 1950s when artist Yves Klein and two female models covered their bodies in paint and rolled across a large sheet of paper in front of an audience. Regardless, both of these works illustrate the great diversity of forms performance art can take, as well as its unifying concept that an action can be art.

THE BIG PICTURE(continued)

Throughout the 20th century and the 21st century to date artists have used performance art to address a broad range of issues, from personal experiences to global politics, to explorations of language, to issues of race and gender.

In her performances, Pamela Z combines sound, vocals, movements, and visual projections into complex, layered experiences. The works might inspire an audience member to make associations between the different words, images, and sounds, gaining certain insights or new ideas about the elements with which she works. In <u>Voci</u>, meaning "voices," Z explores "the sonic, cultural, physical, and artistic worlds of the human voice." She does this by showcasing different aspects of her own voice, exploring its anatomy, its various characters and expressive possibilities, and its function as a vehicle for communication. The technology she uses enables her to increase the complexity of her statement, creating interrelationships between the subject and the media presentation.

SECTION III– RESOURCES

TEXTS

Alterman, Glenn. Creating your own Monologue. New York: Allworth Press, 1999.

Goldberg, Rose Lee. Performance: Live Art Since 1960. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998.

Gómez-Peña, Guillermo. El Mexterminator: Antropología Inversa de un Performancero Postmexicano. Introduction by Josefina Alcázar. Mexico City: Oceano Press, 2002.

Loeffler, Carl E. and Darlene Tong, eds. Performance Anthology: Source Book of California Performance Art. San Francisco: Last Gasp Press, 1989.

WEB SITES

BodySynth™– Web site of SynthZone, the makers of the body-responsive audio technology used by Pamela Z to create sounds through movements and gestures - www.synthzone.com/bsynth.html

New American Radio – A project of more than 300 commissioned or distributed work by sound artists and composers, including on-line listening capability - http://somewhere.org/NAR/NAR_home.htm

Pamela Z – The artist's Web site including full descriptions of her works/repertoire, technology, and biography. Site also has listening options for Pamela Z's tracks. – www.pamelaz.com

WEB SITES (continued)

SoundCulture – International sound art festival "focused on the creative use of sound outside of the field of music by practitioners based in the Pacific region. The event shifts site with each new iteration and is made up of performances, exhibitions, broadcasts, lectures, and other events focusing on aural activities and their placement and function within and across cultures." The Web site includes links to individual festival Web sites and articles on SoundCulture 96 (1996) - www.soundculture.org/

STOMP – Web site for the incredibly popular, long running performance event using musical rhythms and body movements to illustrate and play with abstract ideas. Web site includes audio and video snippets, as well as a section about STOMP and percussion for kids - www.stomponline.com

MEDIA

Alphabet Soup. (VHS) Willliam Wegman. Renowned artist William Wegman brings his famous dogs together on a video to teach children the alphabet. Children will be engaged as the dogs teach them the basic ABCs.

Quidam. (VHS) Cirque du Soleil. Images and Serpent Films production for Granada Media International; producer, Rocky Oldham; director, David Mallet. Columbia TriStar Home Video, 2000.

STOMP! Out Loud. (VHS and DVD) Pan & Scan, with Dolby Digital sound, and interactive menus; including: cast & crew biographies, audio selections, and "The Making of Stomp Out Loud" (Teacher-designed Lesson Plan available at: www.teachnet.com/lesson/misc/stomp042600.html)

SECTION IV – VOCABULARY

DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

Aria(s)
Accompanied melody sung (as opera) by a solo voice

Bel canto
Opera singing (originated in 17th and 18th century Italy) defined by ease, purity, and evenness of tonal production, and a precise vocal technique

Delay
A pause or break in an action, movement, or sound

Delegate
To entrust someone to do something for you

Device
A fanciful or intricately designed object or machine

Lighting
Lights for efficacy and effect in a dramatic performance or presentation

Mesmerize
To captivate, hypnotize, or hold spellbound.

Metaphor
Figure of speech which creates a picture or image in words, for example, *walking on air*; a word or phrase describing an object or idea to which it is not literally applicable, but suggests a similarity between them

MIDI
[Musical Instrument Digital Interface] A protocol for recording and playing music on digital synthesizers that is supported by many makes of PC sound cards

Patterns
A detectable, coherent system or imagery, sound, or action based on the intended interrelationship of its component parts or elements

Protocol
A set of rules that govern the format of data in electronic communications systems

Sample
A single item representative of a larger group; an excerpt of musical composition

Technical
Special and practical knowledge of a mechanical or scientific subject

Technician
One who has acquired the technique of an art or area of specialization

Timbre
Quality of tone distinctive of a certain singing voice or musical instrument

Tools
Instruments used in performing a vocation or profession; means to an end

Transcend
To rise above or go beyond the limits of something

Video Projection
The projection of video imagery for effect

Voice
Sound produced by vertebrates by means of lungs or larynx; especially sound produced by human beings

Volume
The degree of loudness or intensity of sound

SECTION V – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Technology as a Creative Tool
Explore the meaning of the word "technology," with students, discussing what it means to use technology as a creative tool. Keep in mind that technologies are highly time-sensitive - what we might define today as cutting edge technology will quickly be replaced by another.

Show students historical examples of technologies from the 1900s to the present day such as: fluorescent lighting (1930s), tin can (1810), camera (1815), stapler (1841), escalator (1900), bubble gum (1928), frisbee (1948), disposable contact lenses (1978). Talk about these technologies, how they have been used over the years, and how they are viewed today.

Move on to consider how Pamela Z's uses technology in the production of her art. Discuss the tools she employs, such as a MIDI, Macintosh computer, audio software, microphone, The BodySynth™. Ask students what they know about each particular tool and how it contributes to Pamela Z's performance. Use the following questions as prompts.

How does each device function? How does Pamela use The BodySynth™?
What are the unique qualities of each piece of technology, including Pamela Z's voice?
What are the assets and limitations of each device? Are there things Pamela Z can do with her voice that a MIDI or a computer cannot simulate? Vice versa?

Follow this discussion about Pamela Z and her use of audio technologies, by asking students to identify other instances in which technologies are used for dramatic effect. Cite some examples of the creative use of technology, such as LCD displays, neon lights, laser light shows, smoke machines, special effects in the movies, animation, etc.

Working in groups of three, ask students to choose ONE instance of the creative use of technology (encourage the groups to choose different examples) and to develop a short research project around that topic, including:

• How was the technology created, who created it, and for what reason?
• Who uses it presently and where?
• What are the costs associated with the technology (i.e. fabrication and maintenance)?
• In what different situations are the technologies used and for what purpose?
• What is the impact of the technology in the situations in which it is used?

Ensure each member of the group contributes to the presentation, taking responsibility for an aspect of the research. Invite students to share their findings and present their research to the whole group for discussion.

Artists Using Technology – Unexpected Directions
Ask students to identify at least one artist who has used the technology is his/her art for a purpose **other** than that for which it was originally intended. For instance, in 1917 Marcel Duchamp used a urinal (first patented in 1796) to create a sculpture called "The Fountain," using the technology for a purpose other than for what it was originally intended.

Invite students to write a 500-word essay about how the artist used the technology, for and in what art works or performances, and include audience response(s) to the work. Ask students to present their work to the class either as an oral presentation, or by creating a visual display of their research, using images, video and/or audio recordings, and/or fieldtrips.

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Making Art Using Technology

Challenge students to make a work of art using **one** primary technology.

Begin by asking students to make a list of different technologies, identifying the intended purpose for each one. Then ask students to collectively make a list of at least two other alternative purposes for which the technology could be used.

For example:
Technology = stapler
Intended purpose = join papers together
Alternative purpose = make links of metal that are strung together into a necklace
Alternative purpose = "draw" by stapling image on cardboard or paper Technology = egg beater
Intended purpose = combine ingredients; to beat eggs
Alternative purpose = make sounds (that are recorded and played back)
Alternative purpose = to make marks on a page (by removing beaters and inserting pens)

Other objects might include – a light bulb, paper or Styrofoam cup, electric toothbrush, hairbrush, hairspray, calculator, cellophane tape, stamps, pencils and pens, piece of paper, colander, or transistor radio.

Ask students to select one technology to create their work of art, using only 3 or 4 different materials (including the technology) in their work. A theme or area of exploration relevant to the students as a whole or from current events could be chosen as the subject, for example communication, violence, identity, diversity, etc.

When completed, ask each student to present and/or perform his/her work for the class.

**RELATED STANDARDS
MUSIC**

Grade 5
HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT
3.4 Describe the influence of various cultures and historical events on musical forms and styles.

Grade 7
AESTHETIC VALUING
4.1 Use criteria to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of musical performances and compositions.
4.2 Apply criteria appropriate for the style or genre of music to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of performances, compositions, arrangements, and improvisations by oneself and others.

Grades 9-12 Advanced
AESTHETIC VALUING
4.3 Compare and contrast the musical means used to create images or evoke feelings and emotions in works of music from various cultures.

**RELATED STANDARDS
THEATRE**

Grade 5
CREATIVE EXPRESSION
2.1 Participate in improvisational activities to explore complex ideas and universal themes in literature and life.

**Grade 5
CONNECTIONS, RELATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS**
5.2 Identify the roles and responsibilities of performing and technical artists in theatre, film, television, and electronic media.

Grade 8
AESTHETIC VALUING
4.1 Develop criteria and write a formal review of a theatrical production.
Grades 9-12 Proficient – Artistic Perception
1.2 Document observations and perceptions of production elements, noting mood, pacing, and use of space through class discussion and reflective writing.

Reviewing Pamela Z
Pause the video or DVD on the short performance footage featured in the SPARK episode. Play some extracts asking students to close their eyes and listen carefully to the sound.

Challenge students (grades 8+) to write a 5-paragraph review of the, using the following

structure and the Term Sheet to help with vocabulary.

The five paragraphs should include:
- a personal response
- what the piece was "about"
- the overall effect
- the technology she used
- a comment on Pamela Z's style

SPARKLERS:
∗ Think about your voice and how you express what you are saying. Using the Term Sheet in this guide and the Music Vocabulary sheet available in the Tools section of the SPARK Web site (www.kqed.org/spark/education), discuss concepts that affect voice such as volume, voice modulation, tone, and pace, and gestures. Talk about how these affect presentation and performance. Cite instances of dramatic presentation using these qualities, and provide examples (orally).

∗ Read a short written piece (from a story or play or personal writing) drawing on what has been learned about voice production.

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RELATED STANDARDS
LANGUAGE ARTS

Grade 4
LISTENING AND SPEAKING
1.9 Use volume, pitch, phrasing, pace, modulation, and gestures appropriately to enhance meaning.
SPEAKING APPLICATIONS (GENRES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS)
2.4 Recite brief poems (i.e., two or three stanzas), soliloquies, or dramatic dialogues, using clear diction, tempo, volume, and phrasing.

Grade 8
LISTENING AND SPEAKING
1.3 Organize information to achieve particular purposes by matching the message, vocabulary, voice modulation, expression, and tone to the audience and purpose.

Grades 11 & 12
LISTENING AND SPEAKING STRATEGIES
1.7 Use appropriate rehearsal strategies to pay attention to performance details, achieve command of the text, and create skillful artistic staging.

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