

Program Name: Music of the Battlefields: Fife and Drum Music of the Revolutionary and Civil Wars

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Artist: Tri-Percussion

## Special Requirements:

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Two microphones with stands; PA system; chalk; chalkboard with eraser.

## Special Points of Interest:

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Tri-Percussion offers another music performances through KCYA: *Music Around the World*



## Performance Description

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Before the advent of high-tech communications, there was the music of the fife and drum. This music was used to signal soldiers in battle, to set the mood for ceremonies, and to raise the spirits of soldiers and citizens alike. Tri-Percussion (with fifer!) brings history to life through music with stories, characters, and replica instruments of the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.

Music of the fife and drum played a vital role in the military operations of the American Revolution and the Civil War. The camp musicians sounded out “duty calls” throughout the day to direct the soldiers in their daily

responsibilities. The general’s orders were communicated to his men by musicians while practicing maneuvers or in actual battle. The sound of the largest drums could be heard from distances of up to two miles!

Snare drum music is made up of individual sticking patterns called rudiments. When played in various combinations, rudiments form musical phrases called signals. Tri-Percussion will demonstrate these signals emphasizing the communicative functions of music. Students will actively participate in the identification of various battle calls.

## Educational Objectives & Standards

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Students will:

- Explore American history through authentic period music
- Recognize the role of music in communicating specific messages
- Develop listening skills

History:

- Understands the events that contributed to the outbreak of the American Revolution and the Civil War

Music

- Identifies (by genre or style) music from various historical periods and cultures



List of Resources:

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**Books:**

Songs of the Civil War by  
Irwin Silber  
Dover Publications (March  
1, 1995)  
ISBN: 0486284387

Percussion Instruments and  
Their History  
by James Blades, Faber &  
Faber;  
(April 1, 1984)  
ISBN: 0571180817

Handbook of Percussion  
Instruments  
by Karl Peinkofer, Fritz  
Tannigel  
European Amer Music Dist  
Corp  
(June 1, 1976)  
ISBN: 093044809X

**Music:**  
The Civil War - Traditional  
American Songs And  
Instrumental Music Featured  
In The Film By Ken Burns:  
Original Soundtrack  
Recording  
Nonesuch  
ASIN: B000005J00

Contact KCYA for more  
information about this and  
other programs

816.531.4022  
KCYA.org

Percussionist **Mark Lowry** is timpanist for the Kansas City Chamber Orchestra and is a frequent percussionist with the Kansas City Symphony. In 1993, he helped create NewEar, Kansas City's only professional, contemporary chamber music group. **Raymond De Marchi** is a founding member of the Kansas City Percussion Quartet. He is Director of Percussion at William Jewell College.

**John Currey**, the music director and an arranger for Marimba Sol de Chiapas, has more than 10 years experience as an in-school presenter and clinician. He has toured extensively throughout the United States, Mexico, and Western Europe.

Fifer **Emily Smith** is a freelance flutist and flute teacher who performs regularly with the Radio Days Orchestra and the Silverwood Quartet.

Vocabulary

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**Bass drum:** a very large drum that makes a deep, loud noise.

**Duty music:** official military music played throughout the day to give soldiers specific messages about their next duty (from reveille, to call to arms, to battlefield calls.)

**Fife:** a wooden, open-holed flute played transverse (to the side of the face.)

**Reveille:** morning musical wake-up call for soldiers.

**Rope-tension drum:** a drum with a head made tight through ropes that zigzag up and down the drum's sides.

**Secede:** to formally withdraw -- as in 1861, when 11 Southern states seceded from the Union to form the Confederate States of America, starting the Civil War.

Post-Performance Activities

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1. Discuss in class the three kinds of music used in the military and their purposes: (a) Duty music—official military music from wake-up reveille to breakfast call, assembly call, call to arms, battlefield calls, and of course, taps in the evening. (b) Patriotic music—meant to stir the spirit and lift morale of soldiers (e.g. *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.) and (c) Ceremonial music—played for different kinds of ceremonies, from funeral marches to the rogue's march.
2. Discuss what it might have been like for the Civil War drummer boys (aged 12-16) who often lied about their ages to enlist in the Army. Would students today be willing to go out onto a battlefield without any weapons to protect themselves? What did the drummers do that made them so important during the war?
3. Have the class make up a drum signal using the rudiments introduced in the program. Decide how this signal would be used; what would it communicate to their classmates? Students could develop their own rudiments and name them.