

## Iconics in Music Highly Engaging Visual and Tactile Listening Formats

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We all know what icons are...signs, visual images, or pictures that stand for something. The Iconic stage is the second of the levels of learning set forth by noted educator, Jerome Bruner: Enactive, Iconic, and Symbolic. These levels represent our stages of development as we grow and are able to internalize concepts. Eunice Boardman and colleagues, who developed the Iconic method of depicting music, translated Bruner's ideas into music education ideas. This presentation will focus on the Iconic stage because it is accessible to almost everyone, and offers a captivating and enjoyable method to interact with music.

As both music therapist and educator, I have found that icons help engage my clients / students in music. Involving more than one sensory modality draws the attention of the listener; adding visual and tactile stimuli helps even the most distractible of us to focus. In using small felt pieces as the icons for Saint-Saëns' "Aquarium," we can see **melody** by the up and down direction of little fish on the page, **duration** by the length of each fish, **form** by the way the sections are laid out, tone color by the changes of icons and their colors, and even more. Listeners young and old watch with rapt attention throughout the entire selection, often applauding at the end to show their appreciation for they have so enjoyed the experience!

Depicting these concepts, while having obvious implications in adapted music education, has an interesting place in the therapy realm as well. We find complete attention from even non-verbal preschoolers with autism, attaching meaning by connecting their auditory experience to the visual and even tactile. There is an organizing element for the disorganized listener in seeing the musical phrases laid out clearly on the pages in direct correspondence to the phrases as they are heard. There is motivation from the behaviorally challenged as listeners eagerly anticipate the next page. And my deaf students can recognize the musical selections once they have "seen" or "felt" them.

This presentation consists of materials created for my Master's Project. I will show several selections, including "Aquarium," "Kangaroo," and "Swan" from Carnival of the Animals by Saint-Saëns, excerpt from Dvůřák's New World Symphony, Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King" from the Peer Gynt Suite, and "Also Sprach Zarathustra" by Strauss. Formats include books, call charts, rollouts, and lap maps. Focus will be on the process of creating materials for use in practice.

Drawing on resources from the music education world, we can see how useful this method is for reaching nearly every type of client. There are numerous ways to extend this model into the session; we as therapists are limited by our imaginations alone!

For more information about this "Hands-On Music," visit my Web site at [www.the-music-works.com](http://www.the-music-works.com).

### References

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