

THE JAIPUR KAWA BRASS BAND FROM RAJASTHAN INDIA - EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS

The Jaipur Kawa Brass Band are a group Rajasthani gypsies from Jaipur in Northern India. The band features 8 musicians, a fakir and the Gypsy Sapera Kalbelya dancer. The group has been assembled by Hameed Khan Kawa who is best known as director of the acclaimed Musafir. Musically, Hameed has chosen a wild repertoire from Indian traditional music and folklore to popular songs of Indian movies to which he has the sophisticated structures of North Indian classical music to deliver an unexpected and rousing musical experience.

A visit from the Jaipur Kawa Brass Band is a memorable musical journey through the Thar Desert of Rajasthan, the original land of gypsies.

Jaipur Kawa Brass Band regularly tour in Europe but rarely in the UK; this year they will be in Europe from May until November with the whole of June, much of July and October-November in the UK. In addition to appearing at festivals, melas, carnivals, arts centres and theatres the group will be leading workshops and collaborative performances in schools and the wider community. Their spontaneity, enthusiasm and unique style ensures that the audience and participants enjoy a life-enhancing experience.

They perform wearing the traditional costumes of the region and deliver a spectacular and colourful show.

Their instruments include clarinet, trombone, trumpet, alphonium (tuba), saxophone, bass drum, side drum and cymbals.

The dancer with the band hails from the Sapera community, traditional snake charming nomads from the Thar desert. She lives with the snakes, which are worshipped as the guardians of spiritual truth, performing devotional dances with contortions evoking the movements of a dancing cobra.

The fakir, or magician, comes from the ancient tradition of wandering entertainers, going from village to village to amuse with his acts of dancing on nail beds, sword swallowing and balancing acts.

The schools visit typically takes the following form.

PART ONE.

1. Introduction by teacher.

It is suggested that the teacher prepares a short explanation of the plans for the day, says a bit about the group band based on the information above and then welcomes them on stage.

2. Introduction of the band by Siraj, the band's leader.

Siraj will introduce himself and teach the children the traditional Hindu greeting "Nomastay". Siraj will then introduce each band member in turn, who will each play a brief sample on their instrument. The band will then stand back.

3. Manchali.

This is a quiet piece of music played by 3 members only who will come forward playing.

4. Sajanawa.

This is a very catchy number involving the full band to which the children will be encouraged to handclap in time.

Siraj will then relate a short story about camels.

5. Goray Goray.

This is another catchy song. Siraj will teach the "Goray Goray" chorus and encourage the children to join in at the appropriate time.

6. The Fakir. Siraj will then introduce the fakir who will perform a 10 minute show with the backing of the two drummers.

SAFETY NOTE. As with any show involving props it is vital that care is taken to avoid any risk of danger to the children. Siraj, with the help of the teacher, will ensure basic safety precautions are observed.

7. The Dancer.

Siraj will introduce Rasal who will perform a dance routine during the final tune.

8. Finale.

The band will play out by marching off stage into the Hall, around the children.

PART TWO.

1. Questions and answers.

The teacher should ideally assemble the children in a circle around the band, surrounding the musicians, all sitting on the floor. The teacher should set a time limit and encourage questions on ANY subject! Bear in mind that Siraj is the only member in the band who converses in English.

2. Turban demonstration.

The musicians will take off their turbans and demonstrate how they make them.

3. Rhythm workshop.

Siraj will teach the children a simple rhythmic song based on "Taka Taka Taka Douma". The

band will play and the children will sing the piece, led by Siraj.

4. Dance workshop.

Rasal will demonstrate a basic dance routine based on four movements which she and Siraj will then teach to the children. The band will play a tune for the children to dance to.

5. Vocal workshop.

Siraj will teach the children a chorus based on "La La Gal". The band will play the tune and the children will be encouraged to sing and dance to it.

6. Finale.

The band will play and march around joined by the children and the children.

Other information.

The musicians work best with one group, if two groups are involved arrangements have to be made in advance to supply a second interpreter as only one band member speaks fluent English.

For schools with an active music department or those with a basic stock of percussion instruments it is possible for a small number of children to play when marching with the band. The musicians cannot formally teach music but for students able to learn by ear this is possible.

Part one of the performance lasts 40-45 minutes and ensures that the whole school, or a large group, get the chance to experience the atmosphere of a show whilst also receiving some informative comment and the opportunity to participate. Part two lasts 45-60 minutes depending on the time allowed for questions and the pace of learning.

Materials.

Teaching materials prior to the visit: audio CD and DVD, an explanation of the day's activities, photographs of the band and background information on the culture and history of the band and the region. A vocal microphone is helpful for Siraj, the workshop leader. To satisfy Child Protection Regulations the group should be accompanied by two qualified school personnel.

The band has a website, www.kawamusic.org which is well worth a visit.

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