The John Lennon Real Love Project

Online Music and Songwriting Program for Public Elementary Schools

Photo: Bob Gruen
Introduction

The John Lennon Real Love Project is a visionary music and songwriting program that uses John Lennon’s songs and timeless message of peace, love and gender/racial equality to inspire creative expression, kindness and positive social action.

The first part of the program is a dynamic presentation (30 minutes) during which students learn about John Lennon’s most powerful expressions of brotherhood and sisterhood for the purpose of manifesting those qualities in themselves, their schools and their communities.

The second part of the program is an interactive workshop in which students compose their own lyrics to John Lennon’s “Real Love.” Students then record a new version of “Real Love,” which is combined with John Lennon’s own voice and musical accompaniment in a professional recording.

*John Lennon at the Statue of Liberty, October 30, 1974.*

*Photo: Bob Gruen*
Overview

The school selects one grade level, typically 3rd-5th grade, to receive the online presentation and workshop, both of which take place in one school day.

Students view the presentation from their classroom or home via tablet or computer. Afterwards, each class receives a one-hour session with the Teaching Artists to learn about songwriting and compose new lyrical couplets for “Real Love.”

At the end of the day, the teachers, in consultation with the Teaching Artists, select one lyrical couplet from each class, so that voices from each class are heard in the song. Each teacher chooses two students to participate in an online recording session at a later date.

The recording is mixed and sent to the school so that all students and teachers have a copy of their own version of “Real Love” with John Lennon’s voice and instrumental accompaniment.

“Love is a flower you have to let grow.”
—John Lennon
Children Will Learn About

John Lennon
- His important place in music and social history
- His African-American music influences
- His emphasis on peace, love, equality and kindness
- The evolution of his music and personal growth

Lyric Writing
- Creative expression and revision
- Song Structure (Verses, Chorus and Bridge)
- Poetic Devices: Meter, Rhyming, Point-of-view

Rehearsal, Revision and Recording
- Vocal blending
- Second takes
- Recording tips

Social-Emotional Learning
- Successful collaboration
- Respectful dialogue and good listening
- Honoring one another’s work

The Imagine mosaic at Strawberry Fields — Central Park, NYC
About Us

Theatre Within is a grassroots non-profit committed to providing free workshops and programs in creative expression and mindfulness to communities in need. The organization is also committed to celebrating John Lennon’s life, music and message of peace, love, brotherhood and sisterhood with its Annual John Lennon Tribute. Currently, Theatre Within, in partnership with Gilda’s Club NYC and Gilda’s Club Westchester, provides workshops in songwriting, art, meditation and more for children, teens and adults impacted by cancer.

The John Lennon Real Love Project is a songwriting workshop, inspired by John Lennon’s music and message, that empowers participants to compose and record their own songs. With the warm support of Yoko Ono, the workshop launched in 2014 at the Children’s Hospital at Montefiore in the Bronx. The following year, the workshop moved to Gilda’s Club NYC, where it soon expanded to serve both children and adults. In 2020, in celebration of the 80 th year of John Lennon’s birth, this visionary program is being offered to public elementary schools in the New York tri-state area. The curriculum for the John Lennon Real Love Project was created by Beth and Scott Bierko, with Joe Raiola.

Beth and Scott Bierko are Teaching Artists with over 25 years of experience working in public and private schools. Together and with children, Beth and Scott have composed nearly 500 songs, all of which enhance academic and social emotional learning goals for elementary students. Beth Bierko is a certified Kripalu Yoga teacher and Yoga Dance Instructor with additional training in acting and voice. Scott Bierko is a former music teacher, a guitarist and recording engineer with training in voice. Beth and Scott are trained Mindfulness Instructors and the parents of two grown daughters.

Joe Raiola is the Executive/Artistic Director of Theatre Within, which he established as a non-profit in 2006. He is the creator of the organization’s Annual John Lennon Tribute and John Lennon Real Love Project. He has led countless workshops in deep creative process and currently oversees all Theatre Within programs. For 33 years, Joe was a frequent contributor and editorial staff member at MAD Magazine, retiring at the end of 2017 as Senior Editor. He continues to perform around the country in his acclaimed solo show, The Joy of Censorship.

Special Thanks

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**APPENDIX**

**NYS Education and Learning Standards Met by the John Lennon Real Love Project**

**Learning Standards for Music**
- Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic ideas and work.
- Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
- Standard 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
- Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

**Reading Anchor Standards**
- Standard 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Standard 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- Standard 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats.

**Writing Anchor Standards**
- Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- Standard 4: Develop personal, cultural, textual, and thematic connections within and across genres through written responses to texts and personal experiences.

**Speaking and Listening Anchor Standards**
- Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

**Language Anchor Standards**
- Standard 3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
- Standard 5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
- Standard 6: Acquire and accurately use general academic and content-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening; demonstrate independence in gathering and applying vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

**Lifelong Practices of Writers**
- write for multiple purposes, including for learning and for pleasure
- persevere through challenging writing tasks
- enrich personal language, background knowledge, and vocabulary through writing and communicating with others
- experiment and play with language
- strengthen writing by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach
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Changing lives, one new song at a time

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“A dream you dream alone is just a dream. A dream you dream together is reality.”
— Yoko Ono