

## **Ideas for music classes, exploring the vocal orchestra created by prisoners during their imprisonment in a Sumatran camp during World War II...**

### **Scenario:**

You are shipwrecked and surviving on a desert island. The survivors speak many different languages so communication is difficult and morale is low. You have heard no music for months. You have been having sing-songs occasionally but have run out of words and have no instruments. Could you try forming a vocal orchestra in order to bring the group together and sustain morale?

### **Activity:**

Explore as a group what sounds can be made with your voices without using words (vowel and consonant sounds).

1. Choose a well known piece of music e.g. a film or TV theme, or a classical piece. Play the piece for the class first (something the women in the camp could not do).
2. Add vocal sounds to the melody by humming or introducing vowel and consonant sounds.

### **Questions and discussion:**

1. Ask the group how the vocal music made them feel?
2. Did the music sound different to the original?
3. How did it sound different?

### **Rehearsal and performance for older students:**

Arrange a well known melody of your choice for 2 to 4 parts, add the voice sounds and then rehearse to get the required nuances for the mood of the melody. Perform in assembly, perhaps together with a presentation on the history of the vocal orchestra in the camps.

### **Rehearsal and performance for younger students:**

Rehearse a popular piece adding modern vocal elements (e.g. beatboxing, body percussion) and perform in assembly.

### **Definition of a Vocal Orchestra:**

The music is performed without accompaniment or words. The music comes from singing, using vowel and consonant sounds, well known classic melodies arranged in up to four-parts: a capella. N.B. If accompaniment or words are needed for your performance it is not strictly a vocal orchestra. But you can still create your very own tribute to the extraordinary women of Palembang Internment camp, using your own words and music or make instruments to add rhythm or sounds! Perhaps use the sort of resources that would have been available to the prisoners: coconut shells, wood, bamboo etc.

### **Written Resources:**

There are many references to relevant books, films and television programmes to supplement your class teaching on the Singing to Survive website: <http://singingtosurvive.com/links/>