Giraffes Can't Dance

SLSO Learning Lab

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

For Music Educators

Merge music and literacy with this lesson that engages students with the story and illustrations from the beloved picture book *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae, illustrated by Guy Parker-Rees.

This lesson is adaptable for students in grades PreK–1. Its intentional flexibility allows teachers to modify the content to best suit their students' needs.

Objectives

Students will:

- Create expressive movements to accompany music
- Position their bodies to match illustrations
- Recognize when music has stopped and respond appropriately

Standards

Missouri Early Learning Standards

- Approaches to Learning: I.C
- Social-Emotional Development: 1.B
- Language and Literacy: IV.A
- Physical Development: I.A, I.C
- Expressive Arts: I.A, II.A

Missouri Music Learning Standards

- MU: Cr1A.PKa-Ka
- MU: Cr1A.Kb
- MU: Re7B.PKa-1a

Illinois Early Learning Standards

- Language Arts: 1.A, 2.A, 2.B, 2.D
- Physical Development & Health: 19.A, 19.B, 21.A
- The Arts: 25.A

Illinois Music Learning Standards

- MU: Cr1.1.PK-1
- MU: Re8.1.PK-1

Materials

- A copy of *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae, illustrated by Guy Parker-Rees
- One printed set of Freeze Dance Silhouettes, provided starting on page 5 below
- A device on which to play music from the internet
- To encourage expressive movement, distribute scarves or ribbons for each student to move with (optional)

Music Selections

Camille Saint-Saëns', *Carnival of the Animals*
YouTube links are provided below, or access the SLSO *Giraffes Can't Dance* Spotify Playlist

- Kangaroos
- Introduction and March of the Royal Lion
- The Elephant
- Fossils
- People with Long Ears
- Hens and Roosters
- The Cuckoo in the Deep Woods
- The Swan
- Aquarium
- Finale

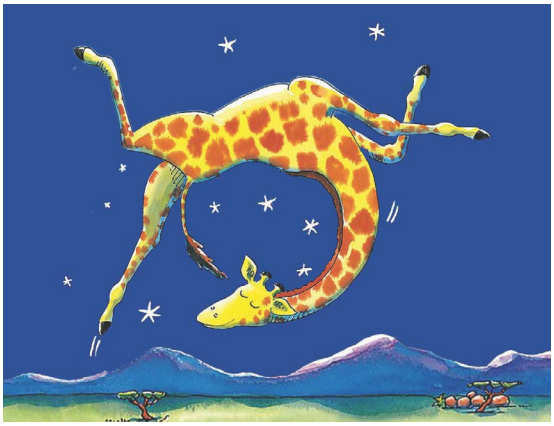
Assessment (4-point rubric)
Student successfully:

- Moves to the beat and style of the music (1 point)
- Changes their movements to match different musical examples (1 point)
- Creates abstract representations of visual images using their bodies (1 point)
- Stops moving when the music stops (1 point)

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SLSO Digital Tiny Tunes: Giraffes Can't Dance

You can enjoy a free digital performance of *Giraffes Can't Dance!* Learn and grow with Gerald the Giraffe as he overcomes adversity, discovers his talents, and finds music that inspires him to dance. Register for free access to this and other digital programs on the SLSO Learning Lab.



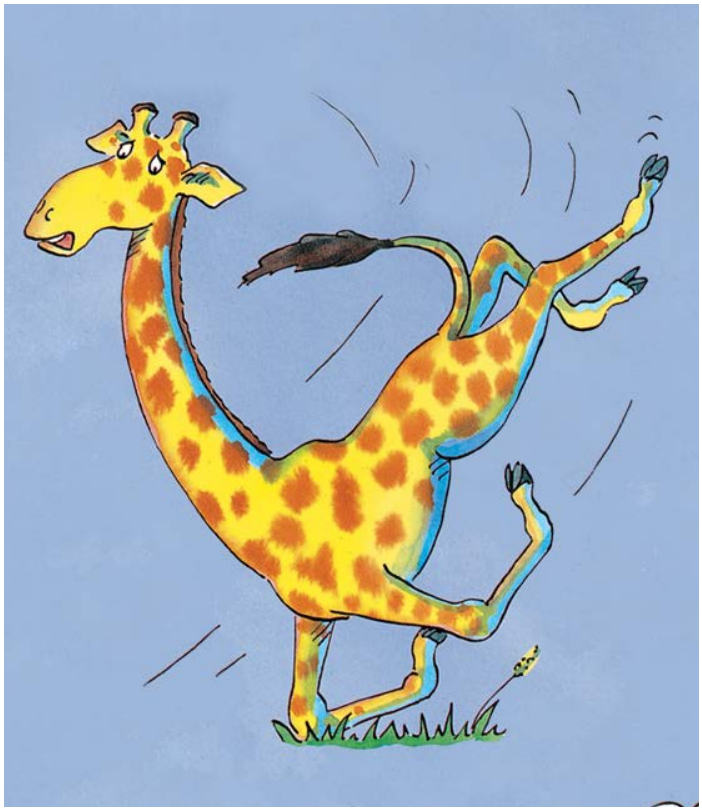
Can you dance like Gerald the Giraffe?

Look at the Pictures

Look at the pictures below and answer these questions for each picture:

- What is Gerald doing in this picture?
- What is happening in the story when this picture appears?
- How do you think Gerald feels in this picture?
- Stand up and make your body look like Gerald's.

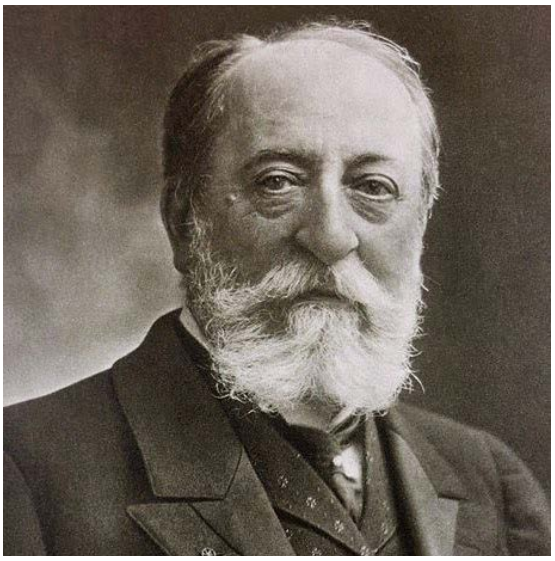




Freeze Dance!

Have you ever done a freeze dance? In a freeze dance, one person needs to be in charge. Pick a leader. If you're at school, the teacher should be the leader (at least at first). If you're at home, maybe everyone can take turns being the leader. The leader is going to start and stop the music. Whenever music plays, everyone dances. When the music stops, everyone freezes! Try it with a few of the musical selections provided above.

Now that you're warmed up, you can make it even more fun by moving like Gerald the Giraffe. This time when the music stops, the leader will hold up one of the Freeze Dance Silhouettes (provided starting on page 5 below). All of the dancers should look at that picture and position their bodies to copy the position of the animal(s) in the picture. Then freeze!



Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921) was a musical prodigy, and his first piano teacher was his aunt. He made his concert debut at the age of ten and started studying at the Paris Conservatory (France's best music school) just three years later. He went on to a successful career as a church organist, pianist, and composer.

Saint-Saëns began composing *Carnival of the Animals* in the 1860s for his students at a school for church musicians. He finished it twenty years later but would not allow it to be published or performed publicly in his lifetime. He thought it was too silly for the serious composer he was trying to be. *Carnival of the Animals* is made up of fourteen short *movements* (independent sections) played by eleven musicians, including two pianists. In it, he *parodies* (mimics to poke fun of) the musical styles of some of his composer friends in short movements portraying animals like lions, chickens, donkeys, elephants, kangaroos, fish, birds, swans, and tortoises. It is now one of Saint-Saëns's most famous compositions.











