

## PIONEER IMAGES OF UTAH

**ARTIST:** George M. Ottinger (1833-1917) Salt Lake City  
**TITLE:** *Immigrant Train or "Away, Away to the Mountain Dell"* 1897  
**MEDIA:** oil on canvas  
**SIZE:** 20" x 40"

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

George M. Ottinger was born in Pennsylvania but was raised in New York City by his uncle. When he was 17, he ran away to become a sailor on a whaling ship. Later, he went to California to find gold, and by the age of 20, he had circumnavigated the globe. At this time, Ottinger moved to New York City, where he studied briefly under Robert Weir before attending the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

In 1861, after having been converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Ottinger and his mother traveled in a wagon train from Florence, Nebraska, to Salt Lake City, a distance of 1079 miles. While in Utah, he engaged in a number of occupations. He was the partner of the photographer C.R. Savage, and he painted scenery for the Salt Lake Theatre for four years as well as completing traditional paintings. Ottinger did not get much money for his paintings; but despite this, he was an influential and respected man of the community. He was Director of the Waterworks, Adjutant General of the National Guard, became President of the Deseret Academy in 1863, (later renamed the University of Utah) and was a Shakespearean actor.

As an artist, Ottinger can be classified as a Romantic Realist and his style is both formal and naive in nature. He painted a variety of subject matter including genre scenes, seascapes, landscapes, portraits, and historical events. One of his paintings, *Self-Portrait as Fire Chief*, (How to Look at Art, Nov. 1991 pkt.) shows his naive style of painting. The figures are stiff and stylized, and the perspective is unschooled. But despite these

elements, the painting historically depicts the artist's life with vibrant colors and an artistic eye.

The current value of his paintings is attributed, in part, to their accuracy and historic detail. Among his major works are western scenes and a series of allegorical and historical interpretations of the history of Mexico. These paintings provide the viewer with glimpses of the scenery, lifestyle, clothing, and other articles of the past. (see *Sugar Refinery Burning*, in *Utah History Through Art II*, Nov. 1993 pkt. and *Flowers of Cola Layona*, in *Cultural Canvas*, Nov. 1994 pkt.)

Ottinger's art also is significant because it provided a base for Utah art. He influenced many young Utah artists and was himself one of early Utah's most important artists. He taught hundreds of students at Utah's first institution of higher learning, the University of Deseret, as well as in private lessons.

Unlike some art, Ottinger's work was valued during his lifetime. Although he was not able to live off his earnings as an artist, he had many commissions and earned numerous medals and awards at art fairs. In his later years Ottinger was challenged by a shift in stylistic tastes, as the art market preferred more impressionistic work. This shift in taste caused him to search for new subject matter that would interest his patrons. However, he never lost his zeal to keep painting. At the age of 67 he wrote, "Individually I feel as young and ambitious and desirous to push ahead as ever, despite the years of discouragement and bad luck."

In *Immigrant Train "Away, Away to the Mountain Dell: The Valley of the Free"*, Ottinger has chosen to portray a Mormon pioneer train disappearing into the distance as it passes Chimney Rock in eastern Wyoming, on the way to Utah Territory. With flute and accordion the pioneers sing the stirring ballad "Away, Away to the Mountain Dell: The Valley of the Free" as they steadily walk westward. To the left can be seen a buffalo skull raised on a stick marking a grave, as parents mourn the death of a loved one.

Ottinger, who immigrated with the Milo Andrus Company, arrived in Salt Lake City in the fall of 1861. G. Wright comments, "Not a hundredth part of the intriguing tale has been told of the stirring drama enacted by stalwart pioneers and their stouthearted womenfolk who carried America westward." This painting depicts a famous moment of Utah history as the pioneers traveled across the plains, an event Ottinger experienced personally.

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## SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

**TITLE:** *Immigrant Train or "Away, Away to the Mountain Dell"* 1897

**MEDIA:** oil on canvas

**SIZE:** 20" x 40"

### **QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING (History, Aesthetics, Criticism)**

Artists use perspective to show depth and distance in their paintings. What techniques did George Ottinger use in this painting to achieve perspective or depth? (Notice objects get smaller, closer together, have less detail, are overlapping, and show atmospheric or aerial perspective closer to the horizon-objects get grayer, bluer, and/or fuzzier.)

What are the people doing? (Besides walking?) Do they seem happy or sad? Why? What kind of songs do you think they are singing? There is an important landmark in this painting. Do you know the name of it? (Chimney Rock) Do you know where in the United States it is located? Why might that location be important?

How does color influence the mood/feeling of the painting? When you look at this painting, what do you think the climate/weather is? (Hot/dry vs. cold/wet) Does this detail influence what you think the people are feeling or doing?

### **ACTIVITIES**

#### **Art/Music/Dance**

**Objectives:** The students will demonstrate their understanding of rhythm by replicating and creating rhythm patterns through clapping, dancing, and through identifying rhythmic patterns in art

Cut colored construction paper into strips, using a separate color for each size strip. One color should be whole sheets, which equal a whole note. One color should be cut in half for half notes, one color in fourths for fourth notes, etc. Teach the children how to count and clap each colored piece of paper. For example, if blue is a whole sheet of paper, for blue, the students clap once as they say "one," then move one hand away from the other in rhythm as they count off "two," "three," "four." It is easiest to start with four beat measures.

When the children can reliably clap the correct rhythm for each of the note values, as designated by the different colors and sizes of paper, show the children with the paper strips how different arrangements of strips add up to the same four beats as the whole note-the whole sheet of paper. Now put two colors (note values) in a simple pattern and have the children clap the rhythm with you. (Use a short space to indicate the end of a measure.) When the children master a pattern, increase the difficulty of the next rhythm pattern.

Now that the children understand how the rhythm patterns work, you can have several of the children create their own patterns, arranging the pattern first in colored paper and then clapping the rhythm with the class. If the group is getting very good and still enjoying the activity, try clapping a rhythm and then having the students replicate the pattern in paper, or let students take turns being the one to clap the pattern and the one to copy the pattern with the colored paper strips.

Teach the children terms as you go along-whole note, half note, quarter note, etc. Besides learning about music, the students will be learning simple fractions. Teach the students whatever musical terminology you are comfortable with or get a teacher with more music experience to help you, and as always, suit the difficulty to your class' level.

When the children can clap the rhythms successfully, add motion to the patterns. ( If you have never done movement activities with the children, they may need suggestions from you to get started, but let the students do as much as they're willing to.) Have individual students pick a movement to match each note value. The movement should match the length of the note. For instance, the whole note movement must have some action that is sustained through the four beats such as slowly curling upward from a squat to stand on tiptoe with arms stretched overhead.

When the movements have been chosen, have one or two students create a rhythm pattern using the colored paper strips. (As with the clapping, start with simple patterns and work up to longer and more complicated patterns at a speed appropriate to the students' skills.) First have the class clap the rhythm pattern, and then have them use the chosen movements to dance the rhythm pattern.

The activity can end here (it may have taken several lesson times to reach this point) or you can continue the activity by allowing each child or small groups of children to make up movement patterns using their own movements for the different note values and their own choice of pattern. Give the students a limit such as four measures of four (16 counts), and stipulate that the movements chosen for each note value must be used consistently for that note value. Have the students take turns sharing their patterns. After each student does his or her pattern once, have the class try to clap the rhythm as the student repeats the pattern, or if you can, beat out the rhythm on a hand drum or with rhythm instruments or improvise on whatever surfaces are available.

The next activity can be used after or in conjunction with the music activities that follow.

To use the knowledge the students have gained from the preceding activity to help them understand art, have the students look at the colored paper as visual rhythms. Make several arrangements with the different colors and sizes including one that is four whole-note pieces, one which has two whole-note and four half-note pieces, and one which has an interesting variety of colors and shapes. Ask the children which arrangement is more interesting and why. Tell the students that artists use rhythm just like musicians and dancers do.

Show the class slides or reproductions of artworks and ask the students to pick out the different ways artists have created rhythm in their works. For very young students, you may want to concentrate on only a couple ways rhythm is created visually, such as color, repetition, and size. Some good examples from this and other Educator Evening packets are *Immigrant Train* by George Ottinger, *Richards' Camp* by J. T. Harwood, *Handcart Pioneers' First View of the Salt Lake Valley* by C. C. A. Christensen, (all in this packet) *The Dark Side of the Garden* by Marilee Campbell, (**A Feminine Perspective**, May 1995 pkt), *Cadmium Crest* by Roman Andrus, (**Journey of the Imagination**, Oct. 1994 pkt), and many others.

The activity also works as an excellent introduction to Abstract Expressionism, Minimalist, or Color Field art, which often use pattern, proportion, and color in ways the students can relate to their experiences with rhythm. The dance activity for Danquart Weggeland's painting *Pioneer Home* also can be incorporated in the preceding rhythm activity or be used as a related or follow-up activity.

To carry on the activity to include a section on art production, give the students construction paper in different colors. The simplest way is to already have the paper cut into pieces that match the note values used in the earlier part of the activity. Have each student arrange the pieces into an interesting visual design. You may want to try clapping some of the artworks to see if the sound has as interesting a rhythm as the visual arrangement does.

Another possibility is to allow the students to cut whatever shapes and sizes of paper they want to use. Just remind them to use the clapping and movement experiences to help them create an interesting rhythmical piece.

**Extension:** For older students, the clapping section can become complex quickly and can be followed with a more complex version of the movement activity. Students may be able to discuss how movements that fit the different note values tend to vary in character with the length of note. This observation can then be translated into a more sophisticated discussion of rhythm in art. These students also should be able to identify other and more subtle ways artists create visual rhythm as well as making more complex artworks themselves.

### **Music-Elementary Level**

**Objective:** Students will create rhythm patterns using sounds and their bodies while singing songs and learning games played by pioneer children.

Background Information: Ottingers' alternate title for the painting *Immigrant Train*, is "*Away, Away to the Mountain Dell: The Valley of the Free*," which was the title of a popular LDS pioneer hymn. The hymn was written by a Scotsman, John Lyon (1803-1889) who joined the LDS church in 1844 and emigrated to the United States in 1853. Lyon and his family sailed to New Orleans and then traveled upriver on a paddle boat to Keokuk, a small town about 12 miles south of Nauvoo, Illinois. On June 2, a group of 50 "Saints" left on their 1,344 mile trek to Utah with John Lyon in charge. The group

arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on September 30.

Although Lyon did not learn to read or write until in his twenties, he became a well-known and well-loved poet and hymn writer, given to writing optimistic and celebratory verse as well as to humorous parodies and writings that "contemplate the absurdities and inconsistencies in frontier Utah life. "

### The Mountain Dell

Chorus [after each verse]

Away, away to the mountain dell,  
The valley of the free:  
Where faith has broke the tyrant's yoke,  
That bound fair liberty.

We'll plow, and sow, and joyful reap,  
The land our God has given;  
To bless our friends, to bless our foes,  
And make our home-a heaven.

Away, away, &c.

No famished children there shall pine,  
Nor frantic mother wild,  
Ere seek to take that life away  
She gave her infant child!

Where red men trail the buff'lo's track,  
O'er mountain's desert sand-  
We'll tell them of their father's acts'  
Who once possessed the land.

Then while this hour of vengeance low'r,  
And sinners find no rest;  
Then hie ye home, ye Saints who roam,  
Your hope is in the west!  
(Millennial Star 1850, 80)

The text of the hymn and the other background information was obtained from John Lyon: The Life of a Pioneer Poet, by T. Edgar Lyon Jr., Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 1989

Show the class the slide of George Ottinger's painting *Immigrant Train* and give the students whatever biographical or background information seems appropriate. (For example, the pioneer children used games and songs to entertain themselves-they would have had few or no toys.) Each of the songs should be used to reinforce the children's awareness of the repetition in pattern that is all around us.

I. Learn and sing the song "ROCKY MOUNTAIN." It is a good, spirited song that is easy to learn and fun to sing.

When the children have learned the song, have them make up their own verses, and then have them make up hand motions for the chorus.

Explain the word *ostinato*. (Ah-sti-NAH-toe) An ostinato is a part of a song that is sung over and over again by a smaller group while the rest of the group sings the main song-it is like vocal accompaniment. Teach the children the ostinato to "ROCKY MOUNTAIN," which is the "do-do-do-do" part. Have one group start the ostinato and the other group come in and sing the main part of the song.

II. Show the slide of *Immigrant Train* by George Ottinger. Ask the students what they see in the painting. Ask if they see any repetitive patterns. After the students respond, direct their attention to the wagon train. The following activities can be used to reinforce the students' understanding of repeating patterns.

Have the students think of ways they can clap their hands or make other appropriate sounds that would show the pattern of the wagon train. For example, clap for a wagon and tap knees in between wagons. After you get a few suggestions for rhythm patterns that fit the wagon train, ask the students to come up with actions that show the pattern of the wagon train. For example, stand up for a wagon and bend over in between the wagons. After you get a few responses for these body patterns, combine the rhythm pattern sounds with the body movements and make a human wagon train with the whole class.

III. After this last activity, suggest a pattern that is the pattern of the next singing game the children will learn to sing and play. It is called "STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE." (If you want to change the beginning words for older children you can, although I've found they enjoy singing it the way it is.) In teaching this song, first teach the swinging arm and clapping rhythm pattern. Then teach the song and game and play it a few times. To keep their interest, ask questions such as the following: What month does not have any birthdays in it? Which month has the most? The least? Everyone choose a different month or choose a month that belongs to your neighbor.

#### INSTRUCTIONS

1. All stand in a circle, holding hands, swinging arms on beat while singing the song.
2. After the song is sung, all let go of hands and swing-swing, clap-clap while singing the names of the months on s - m (sing on the swings, don't sing on the claps.)
3. Every child jumps in [clap] and out [clap] right on the beat after their birthday month is sung on the preceding swing-swing.
4. When all the months have been sung, all sing "Happy Birthday," while doing a swing-swing, then clap-clap, then "Everybody!" on the next swing-swing, then all jump in [clap] then out [clap] and freeze.

IV. For this next activity song, you will need one or two apples or small objects that can be passed around easily. This song is called "APPLE TREE." Teach the song first by singing it a couple of times and then having the students join in. To play the game, everyone sits in a circle, knees crossed, relatively close to each other. While singing the song, pass the apple around the circle. Try to encourage everyone to hear and feel the beat and pass the apple on the beat. Explain obvious rules such as no throwing, no holding, etc. Whoever has the apple on the last word of the song-"OUT"-is out of the game. The game continues until only one person is left. Encourage class members who are out to watch carefully to see who gets out next. When the children get really good at the game, start two apples around at the same time, each starting at different parts of the circle and going in the opposite direction.

#### V. "OLD LADY GOOSE"

1. All stand in a circle with backs to the center, eyes closed and hands over eyes. The **chooser** stands in the middle of the circle. All the children sing "OLD LADY GOOSE." (See songs at the end of activity)
2. Before the end of the song, the **chooser**, without being seen or heard, taps one of the children on the back. The tapped child is the **goose** but does nothing yet.
3. At the end of the song, the **chooser** must be back in the center of the circle. All the children in the circle open their eyes and turn around.
4. The **chooser** chooses another child to be the **goose catcher**. This child walks carefully around the outside of the circle. When the **catcher** passes the **goose**, the **goose** tries to sneak softly away around the circle in the opposite direction or to follow the **catcher** at some distance behind. The whole object at this point is to create suspense and to prolong it as long as possible before the **goose** is discovered.
5. Once the **goose** is discovered, the **catcher** gives chase and tries to catch the **goose** before he or she gets back to his or her place.
6. The chasing rules:
  - ï Neither the **catcher** nor the **goose** can run through the circle.
  - ï The **goose** has to make one complete circle before going back to his or her place.
  - ï If the **goose** is caught before reaching home, the **catcher** becomes the new **chooser**, and the game begins all over with the new players.
  - ï If the **goose** reaches home before being caught, the **goose** becomes the new **chooser**, and the game begins all over with the new players.

VI. "HI-YO-HI-YO-IPSI-NAYA" This is a Navajo singing game. The words don't mean anything-they're just nonsense syllables. Have the children sit in a circle as for the "APPLE TREE" game. Sing the chant several times and have the children join in. Then, as they sing have them tap their own knees with both hands to the rhythm of the song. The second time through, have them tap their own knees once and then shift their hands to the right and tap their own right knee with their own left hand and their neighbor's left knee with their own right hand, back to their own knees and then to the left. Have the children come up with their own pattern while singing the song and put them all together. You can have one child sit in the middle and play a drum while singing the song.

## VII. "CUT THE CAKE"

1. All stand in a circle with a spacious running path outside the circle, one child, the cake cutter, stands in the center of the circle.
2. As the group sings "clap your hands together," they all clap on the word "clap."
3. As the group sings "give yourself a shake," all improvise a shake movement for the duration of the phrase.
4. As the group sings "make a great big circle," everyone joins hands.
5. As the group sings "then you cut the cake," the cake cutter rushes to the edge of the circle and "slices" both hands through the held hands of two children. If the child in the center is a girl, she must cut between two boys or a girl and a boy and vice versa if the cutter is a boy.
6. The cake cutter remains inside the circle while the two children whose hands were divided rush around the outside of the circle in opposite directions, taking care not to collide halfway around. The cake cutter watches carefully to see which one of the children arrives back at the opening first. The first one back becomes the new cake cutter and the game is repeated several times.

(Note: Played out of doors on grass or in a large, indoor space, running is appropriate. In a less-spacious place such as a classroom, heel-toe walking or walking backwards can be substituted without diluting the spontaneity of the activity.)