**Educational Outline—American**

Personnel/Instruments:  
*Soprano*

*Alto*

*Tenor*

*Bass*

*Fiddle, harp (sometimes early flute)*

*Guitar, modern banjo, early African-American banjo*

***“Give Good Gifts”*** (all singers, *a cappella*)

Welcome and introduction of musicians and American music. Talk about the Shaker tradition, beliefs, and history. Introduce “Pretty Home”, Sister Patsy Williamson (African-American Shaker), and the musical and cultural idea of calling and responding. Using this approach, teach them the song and have them sing along, echoing soloist.

***“Pretty Home”*** (women, *a cappella*, with stomping)

Note how the first two songs we sang were *a cappella*. The next song, “Stillwater” was written by Thomas Hastings, who wanted the piece to be sung a cappella as well. Demonstrate how we could sing it in a more traditional manner (church hymn style) and then how we came upon arranging it with added instruments, turning it to a waltz-like song. Depending on age and setting, mention how lyrics from the 23rd psalm were re-purposed for this piece.

***“Stillwater”*** (quartet of singers with fiddle and guitar)

As appropriate, ask students to describe what “Cajun” means to them. Give a bit of history of Cajun music and how it derives from the word “Acadian. ” Speak about French people’s historical struggles and their travels from Nova Scotia, Canada to Louisiana. Listen for Scottish influences such as bagpipes.

***“Acadian Dances”*** (fiddle and guitar)

Demonstrate the variety of vocal ranges represented in our group and what our voices can do. Younger audiences entertained by a “competition” of voices, especially with sopranos. “Wayfaring Stranger” gives our bass a rare chance to sing the melody, but also is an example of working within an ensemble connecting voice and instruments. Older audiences given history of “Wayfaring Stranger” as an example of a piece that may have existed for a long time (through oral tradition) but not preserved in written/published form until much later.

***“Wayfaring Stranger”*** (solo voice, fiddle and banjo)

The high register of the voice is featured in the next piece. A brief warm-up with the students as they vocalize using an “ng” hum to stretch their own ranges. Depending on time and audience, a discussion of vocal health and suggestions are shared.

***“Peace and Joy”*** (solo voice with back-up harmonies, fiddle and guitar)

Much instrumental music was meant for dancing. Here is a medley of three dance forms, a *March*, *Strathspey* and *Reel*. Mnemonic devices such as “Coca-cola” and “This is how a reel goes” are used to help the students listen and identify when the medley/rhythm shifts into the next dance form. Younger children are encouraged to move to the music in their own personal space.

***“Cape Breton Medley”*** (fiddle and guitar)

History of the outlawing of traditional/Scottish instruments by the English is discussed, and the idea of making music via imitation of percussion or melodic instruments is introduced. Explain the history behind “mouth music” as relating to the repression of traditional cultures and the banning of musical instruments. *Puirt a beul*, or tunes from a mouth were invented as a substitute, specifically for dancing. This is sung in Scot’s Gaelic and is mostly nonsensical, like scat singing in the jazz tradition. It found its way all the way to Cape Breton Island in modern-day Canada. Listen for the same dance forms as in the last medley— *March*, *Strathspey* and *Reel*.   
***“Puirt a beul”*** (women’s voices, harp and guitar)

Q & A

Closing  
End with closing remarks, review as time permits, and introduction of Shape-note singing and Southern Harmony vocal style. Introduce (if we haven’t already) the important early banjo on our stage: a great example of how African folk instruments and styles of playing helped shape the evolution of what we now call Country, Bluegrass and Jazz.

***“Jordan’s Shore”*** (all singers and instrumentalists)