

THE LOCAL GIRLS, *vocal trio with guitar*

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Cowgirls: Their Songs and Stories

LENGTH OF PROGRAM: Approximately forty minutes, Question and Answer session included

PROGRAM IS APPROPRIATE FOR: All grade and age levels

MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PROGRAMS THAT CAN BE GIVEN IN ONE DAY:

In same location: 4 With location changes: 4
(Workshops may take the place of multiple programs)

TECH REQUIREMENTS: Artists can perform acoustically for classroom situations and small auditoriums. For larger venues, the following will be needed: • Five vocal microphones • one straight Mic stand • four boom stands • two stage monitors; professional sound system with sound technician (equalizer and effects)

TIME REQUIRED FOR SET UP/TAKE DOWN: Fifteen minutes each

ASSISTANCE REQUIRED WITH SET UP/TAKE DOWN: Artists require sound equipment and technician to run it.

ADVANCE MATERIALS AVAILABLE: CD ("I Want to be a Cowboy's Sweetheart" by Patsy Montana), Study Guide (includes pre- and post-concert teaching materials with a suggested bibliography); Publicity Packet

PROGRAM THEME: The songs of the American West speak to the wilderness, the hardships, the loneliness, the freedom, and the spirit of its courageous settlers. Why did the West provide such a singular opportunity for women? The focus is on how women, some with and some without men, contributed to the making of this distinctively American culture.

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM: The program develops chronologically, beginning with the early, isolated "lonely but free" figure describing a landscape with little but the *Tumbling Tumbleweeds*. Entries are read from the diaries of the women who made the arduous trip out west. When the European immigrants made their way across the Great Divide, they brought their own musical roots: this is where the cowpokes learned to yodel. The Local Girls sing a Patsy Montana song and teach the students how to yodel.

After the Civil War, many of the newly freed African Americans settled the west. They, along with the surviving native Americans and Mexicans, made up one third of the working cowhands. The influence of both the Black and Appalachian culture is heard in the song *When I Was a Cowboy* accompanied with traditional instruments - banjo, dulcimer, guitar, and limber-jack, with the students joining in on the rousing refrain.

GREAT LAKES PERFORMING ARTIST ASSOCIATES

1100 N. Main St., Ste. 107, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 • 734/665-4029 • info@greatlakespaa.org

The next era brought profound changes to the lives of the settlers: fences and railroads. Two songs, *Here Comes the Santa Fe* and *Don't Fence Me In* address these changes. In an effort to keep what was now a vanishing way of life alive in the imagination of the American people, Wild West shows toured throughout the country featuring some of the West's most famous cowgirls. Their stories are told and their songs are sung, and students are taught the yips of cattle calls. The artists discuss how children, then and now, have contributed through their work in the West. The program closes with a song written by America's favorite cowgirl, Dale Evans-- *Happy Trails to You!*

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES: Students will learn, through folk song and stories, something about what women's lives were really like in the Old and the current West. Often women have been mentioned at all in the history of trail literature, they have been victims of stereotyping, not unlike Hollywood's version of Native Americans. But going west was " a human experience in which all -- men, women, and children -- participated as individuals." ¹ The music will acquaint students with the variety of experiences the women faced, and by listening to excerpts from actual documents women have left behind, the students, girls and boys, will grasp the richness of these lives and see the possibilities of their own. Because music made up a large portion of the cowgirls' daily lives - it was their sole entertainment for dancing, warding off loneliness, communal campfire singing and actually calming the restless cattle- the music will enrich the students' understanding of an important part of American History.

¹ Myers, Sandra. Ho for California: Women's Overland Diaries from the Huntington Library. San Marino: 1980.