

# SKIP GORMAN

Bookings & Management  
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## Programs: Music In The Schools

Presenting educational programs suitable for:

- Primary Grades Learning About the Westward Movement
- High School American Studies Classes
- College level American Studies and Ethnomusicology Classes
- Libraries and Summer Reading Programs

## Music of the Old West

In his travels throughout the country and in Europe, Skip Gorman has sensed a compelling need for young people to discover a version of the history of the West-untainted by Hollywood and Nashville's sensationalist view of weaponry and violence. His focus, therefore, is on the care and nurturing of animals, life on the range, the courage of settlers crossing the unforgiving prairie and the excitement of geographic discovery.

Using songs, stories, poems and a variety of period instruments, such as minstrel banjo, cross tuned fiddle, harmonica, guitar, cow bones and the 'limberjack,' Skip leads students on an enriching and enjoyable journey through the history of the American West. While touching on the explorations of Lewis and Clark (1804-1806), Gorman's programs primarily focus on the period of Westward Expansion (1840-1900). Students learn about the lives of early pioneers; women as emigrant wives and cowgirls; black cowboys; Mexican vaqueros and their lingo; native Americans; gold seekers; cattle drives and the building of the Transcontinental Railroad.

Dressed in historic cowboy garb, Gorman brings the real American West to life through remarkable musical performances and spellbinding stories. Drawing on the lyrics of old time ballads themselves, his techniques have fueled writing and storytelling projects among students in schools where he has performed.

Whether in Kansas, Colorado, New York or Maine, students enjoy learning with Skip Gorman-an experienced history and Spanish teacher. With a degree in Latin American

Studies from Brown University, Gorman taught full time for twelve years at Suffield Academy (CT) and Tilton School (NH). Gorman lived in Utah for many years and has worked as a cowboy on ranches in Wyoming.

He has three recordings on the Rounder label, one a finalist for the prestigious NAIRD Award. His music was selected by Ken Burns for two PBS documentaries: Lewis & Clark and Baseball. Gorman has recently performed on Garrison Keillor's A Prairie Home Companion on PBS.

Study guide and bibliography available upon request. Affordable rates. References provided.

### **Music In the Schools**

Living history \* Ballads \* Authentic music

Fascinating Facts about the Westward Movement

- In the 1800s, it took six months of constant hardship to travel by wagon across the country.
- Heading west meant leaving most of your worldly possessions back east- or, quite often, discarding them somewhere along the trail.
- Nearly a half million people crossed the Mississippi River heading west by covered wagon between 1840 and 1865.
- Deep ruts in stone made by thousands of westward wagons can still be seen today in sections of emigrant trails.
- Women played an extraordinary role in settling the West.
- The heyday of the free-range cattle drives only lasted about 25 years - from 1865 to 1890.
- Following the Civil War, about 20% of all cowboys were former slaves, freed by the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863.
- Cowboys, cowgirls and wranglers were often teenagers.

Many words are specific to the cowboy way of life, for example:

- Dogie (also dough gut or dough belly): motherless calf
- Buckaroo: a cowboy or bronco buster
- Bronco: an untamed horse
- Wrangler: one who herds remuda horses
- Waddie: a fill-in (or temporary) cowboy
- Roundup: the gathering of the herd
- Chuckwagon: a kitchen on wheels that follows the roundup

Much of our today's "Cowboy Lingo" is derived from the Spanish language:

- vaquero: (cowboy) ...became "buckaroo"
- la reata: (rope) ...became "lariat"
- chaparejos: (leather pants) ...was shortened to "chaps"
- pintar (to paint) A "pinto" is a spotted pony.
- remudar: (to exchange) A "remuda" is a herd of spare horses.

## Music In the Schools

What educators and students say...

*"This is music education as it ought to be. Skip's presentations seamlessly combine musical demonstrations and incisive commentary on the social and historical significance of his music. According to student evaluations, Skip's performance was a highlight of the course. "*

Theodore Levin, Ph.D.

Professor of Ethnomusicology

Dartmouth College

*"Skip Gorman's stories and anecdotes are very insightful and convey to the students the true flavor of the period, as well as historical facts and, of course, the music of the period. I was very impressed with his ability to connect with the children and keep their attention throughout his performance."*

Susan C. Hoag

Director - New Hampshire Music Festival

*"Our 5th grade teacher felt he brought the history of the Westward Movement to life. The real saddle, lasso, chaps, fiddle, guitar and Western paraphernalia really excited the students."*

Donna Knightly

Co-Chair – MVPTC

Mount Vernon, ME

*"What a fun and interesting performance for the kids. Your story and song about how Utah Carroll sacrificed his life and saved the young cowgirl, Varo, from the stampede had all the kids in the gym spellbound."*

Roseann Kramer, Teacher -

Bristol Elementary

Bristol, NH

*"I loved the way you shut off the lights because it set the mood of being under the stars by the campfire. I also liked the way you sang exactly what you were trying to say because music sticks with you... I'm glad you came."*

Amanda Pray,  
Student - Dike-Newell School  
Bath, ME