

# Rhythm Activities in Music for Dementia

**Name That Tune** – hum, la-la, or sing a portion of a familiar song and have residents determine the name of the song. Then sing together. This can also be done with clips of recorded music. Key: to actively engage as many residents as possible, remembering to repeat out loud what one resident says so others can hear.

**Rhythm Group Soloing** – Start a simple rhythmic beat and have different residents solo. Conduct the group to stop playing while one resident continues playing, then bring the whole group back in. During solo, help other residents maintain attention by using visual and verbal cues (such as pointing, saying “Listen to Betty”, etc.).

**Song Writing** – Write a song with the group. One way is to use a familiar song and re-write the words. Another way is to identify a topic, jot down a few of the things the residents say, and repeat a phrase out loud to the group and have them put rhythm and melody to it. I.E., if Ralph says, “I like pizza and popcorn”, ask Mary to set that to a rhythm. Then ask Fran to sing it anyway she would like.

**Movement** – Within a rhythm group or as a separate activity such as My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean, engage the residents in upper body and lower body movement, deep breathing, and general muscle involvement.

**Rhythm Group Dynamics** – During a rhythm group, lead changes in dynamics: play loud, play soft, play fast, play slow. Use very exaggerated visual cues when leading these changes.

**Orientation** – Sing songs that relate to the present moment, i.e. patriotic songs on 9-11; songs about rain on a rainy day. Talk about the present moment, then sing about it (or play music that is relevant).

**Resident Conducting** – have a resident conduct the group. Arm up means stop (and GET READY), arm down means play.

**Hello and Goodbye songs** – signify the beginning and end of a group. It is often fun to write these songs with the group. Hello songs are fun when there is an echo part or a question so each member of the group will contribute right from the beginning. Goodbye songs help to provide closure to the group.