

Section 5:

AOSA Teacher Education Curriculum Standards

Rationale for Teaching Orff-Schulwerk

V 4.1 / November 1, 2012

The American Orff-Schulwerk Association acknowledges and seeks to continue the work of composer Carl Orff, his colleague Gunild Keetman, and many others in developing the synthesis of speech, movement, and music in educational settings. Evidences of the strength and appeal of Orff Schulwerk are its dispersal throughout the world and the unspoken bond among its supporters.

The American Orff-Schulwerk Association supports and promotes Orff Schulwerk as a model for music and movement education in schools in the United States because it offers a potential for active and creative music making by all children, not just the musically talented. Further, Orff Schulwerk develops musicianship through singing, playing instruments, speech, and movement. Active music making is the core of this philosophy, supporting both the conceptual and affective development of children. Active learners develop more thorough and better long-term understanding of the material and ideas involved. Children who regularly improvise and create their own dances and musical settings are uniquely prepared to solve problems in many other contexts.

Orff Schulwerk music and movement pedagogy contributes to development of the individual far beyond specific skills and understandings in the arts. These skills and procedures have a wider application and value in several areas:

Intellectual: The critical-thinking and problem-solving tasks involved in Orff Schulwerk call upon both linear and intuitive intellectual capacities. The carrying out of creative ideas calls upon organizational abilities as well as artistic knowledge and skill.

Social: Orff Schulwerk is a group model, requiring the cooperative interaction of everyone involved, including the instructor. It is important that artistic development occurs within a satisfying and supportive human environment. Tolerance, helpfulness, patience, and other cooperative attitudes must be cultivated consciously. The ensemble setting requires sensitivity to the total group and awareness of the role of each individual within it. Problem solving, improvisation, and the group composing process provide opportunities for developing leadership.

Emotional: The artistic media involved—music and movement—provide the individual with avenues for non-verbal expression of emotions. The exploratory and improvisatory activities can provide a focus for emotions, a means for release of tension and frustration, and a vehicle for the enhancement of self-esteem.

Aesthetic: As knowledge of and skills in music and movement grow, students will have opportunities to develop standards of what is considered “good” within the styles being explored.

The Teaching Process

The prototype of the active music and movement model known as Orff Schulwerk is the spontaneous play of young children in which imitation, experimentation, and personal expression occur naturally and unconsciously. In the Orff Schulwerk process, aspects of play are developed consciously to involve learners with the elements of music and movement. These categories of activity, through the use of speech, singing, movement, body percussion, and instrumental play, include the following:

Preliminary Play: Guided experiences in spontaneous exploration of the materials under focus

Imitation: Accurate replication (echo response of a given pattern)

Exploration: Guided experiences in applying suggested ideas

Improvisation: Invention of original material

Integration

Children learn about and interact with the world in a holistic way; educational experiences that replicate this learning style provide natural, optimal learning. Children’s play serves as the prototype—speech, song, movement, dramatic situations, and often instrumental play as well, join and overlap as appropriate. The Orff Schulwerk model maintains the concept of integration, combining music, movement/dance, speech, and drama as natural extensions of each other. The process of integration complements the development of skills in each area, stimulates creative imagination, and offers an opportunity for individual strengths to be used and recognized. Integration of these areas results in a unique, elemental synthesis of the performing arts. To model and facilitate effective integration, all faculty members of a given course must meet regularly to consult and plan.

Performance

Though preparing music and movement material for presentation to an audience is not a primary focus of the Orff Schulwerk approach, the value of performance is recognized. As discussed above, the process of learning, developing, and creating material is foremost; however, the opportunity to refine and share this material can be highly motivating. It can also generate higher levels of skill development and lead to individual and group satisfaction and pride.

Music Literacy

In the Orff Schulwerk approach, learning music by rote processes is considered valid in its own right. Learning to read music notation is seen as a logical extension of being able to make music. No particular method of teaching music reading is recommended. In the United States, moveable *do* with tonic *sol-fa* and the Curwen hand signs have come to be used frequently for vocal development. Letter names must certainly be employed in playing the barred instruments and recorder. Experimental graphic notation, hand levels, the hand staff, scale numbers, rhythm syllables—all these and more—have been used effectively in developing literacy skills; different situations will call for different means. The guiding principles are that notation and reading be built on known musical materials and that sound precede symbol.

The purpose of Orff Schulwerk is to awaken the artistic potential in every individual and offer a context in which this can be exercised. The Orff Schulwerk approach as a model for learning involves a much broader spectrum of artistic activity than is traditionally included in music. It is “never music alone but forms a unity with movement dance and speech.”¹ It is not intended to develop highly accomplished performers. The emphasis is on process rather than performance; on participation by all, each at his or her own level; and on the cultivation of skills for creating and developing ideas within music and dance rather than reproducing set forms. Learning results from the mutually stimulating interaction of instructor and students, the freedom and opportunity to take risks, and the accomplishment of creative tasks appropriate to each stage of development.

¹ Carl Orff, “Orff-Schulwerk: Past and Future,” in *Orff Re-Echoes*, ed. Isabel McNeill Carley (Cleveland, OH: American Orff-Schulwerk Association, 1977), 6.