

SERENDIPITY AND PERSISTENCE: A JOURNEY BUILDING A RICH MUSIC-MAKING
CULTURE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Synthesis Project Presented

by

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Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, University of Massachusetts Boston,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2011

Critical and Creative Thinking Program

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ABSTRACT

SERENDIPITY AND PERSISTENCE: A JOURNEY BUILDING A RICH MUSIC-MAKING CULTURE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

August 2011

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I am a music teacher in the public schools. This synthesis project presents a Practitioner's Portfolio to convey my efforts over the last decade and more in pursuit of a rich culture of music in public schools. Readers should see someone who persists when faced with personal, pedagogical, intellectual, and institutional challenges. Moreover, that persistence is conducive of the serendipity through which opportunities open up to be an agent of change. What is also evident to me as I assembled the Portfolio was that the Kodály model of artist, scholar, and pedagogue seems to have been the underpinning for much of my journey of inquiry and practice even though my formal Kodály training began some years after this journey starts.

Part I is a narrative describing the path of events and thinking on this journey, which continues to this day. This account includes explorations into the power of opera, bones playing, jug band, and Kodály pedagogy to effect change and create unforgettable experiences in the music classroom. One has serendipity again and again, but one must be open to it and catch the bright wave, to revisit, explore and develop more experiences for teaching and learning that fit

the particular culture of the time and situation. The act of persistence, the witnessing of what is unfolding and where the tendencies and interests are, encouraging and nurturing them as well as the act of letting go, can create enormous depth and richness to a culture of music for a school or community.

Part II presents some persistent or emerging undercurrents informing my theory and practice, which range from centonization to leverage, from shaping by successive approximations to differences of aesthetics among students that allows me to work more freely.

Part III presents some exhibits of my practice, which include: use of the Mexican singing story and picture book, “Senor Don Gato,” to teach about opera, given that it has the same dramatic elements; the development of an opera program that was instrumental in changing the social climate of a school; the use of a singing game to build strong and cooperative community in a class new to me; and the sharing of these ideas and their potential with colleagues at Massachusetts Music Educators Association conferences, where I have presented regularly.

Part IV discusses my next steps as Scholar, Pedagogue, Artist, and, I hope, Writer. These steps range from having more singing in schools where I teach to refining a once weekly Kodály curriculum, to creating a musical presentation based on Greek mythology with my fifth graders, to establishing an effective practice of writing and documenting my inquiries more regularly and effectively.

The Appendices provide some further illustrations of my practice: The development of Kodály primers for young American students; the development of my personal artistry through Little Blue Heron, a duo that worked with children and included them in performance; and the development of a richer music educators’ community through regular presentations to my colleagues and the reviving of Round Robin, the newsletter of Boston Area Kodály Educators.

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Dedication

There are many people who have been part of this ongoing journey, but I would like especially to thank:

Peter Taylor, my advisor, who utterly changed my way of thinking and life

Stacie Marinelli, my friend, who stayed steadfast

My father, Donald A. Cook, who taught me many things; among them, the importance of accuracy and probity in research

and most of all

Dawn Mather Cook,

my mother, who took me to the land of ideas and taught me joy in learning.

PART I

A PRACTITIONER'S NARRATIVE

...And so the notion of and direct experience of serendipity – I could not have predicted the numerous strands of possibility that resulted from the simple idea of a concert for the children. Yet, when it was there, I pursued the possibilities, awed by the impact and the possibilities unfolding in front of me and wondering what else might be possible...

I am a curious person. This narrative seeks to describe how I came to make this inquiry – the path of events and thinking that led me on this journey, which continues to this day. Though completely unintentional, my journey reflects the Kodály model of artist, scholar, and pedagogue. I only realized this in the latter stages of writing this capstone, when I was able to take a step away from the trees.

To give a practical beginning to this quest, I will start with my experiences teaching in Somerville, Massachusetts public schools during the late 1990s. I was struck by the lack of knowledge my students had about music. I had been preceded by a teacher who (as is often the case) did not teach them much content, but also had not fostered the habit of actually working in the classroom. This I have found to be a common problem in music classes. Music inspires subjective response, and many people take their music extremely personally. This is even truer of children. While the somewhat adversarial relationship music educators have with pop music can be challenging, the very subjectivity of students with regard to musical study in school is also an opportunity, as it speaks to the intense power that music holds in our lives in our larger culture. The question is how to use this opportunity in a meaningful way to entice children to the

larger world of music and importantly, to the habit of learning and enjoying the products of their own work and learning driven by curiosity and sense of connection to a topic.

While in my first school in Somerville, I did several things that influenced my thinking and activities. One was to work on a percussion unit. Percussion seduced the students who were prone to misbehaving into relatively compliant behavior and attentive, sustained work in the performance of created rondo compositions. The rondos included eight to sixteen bars of individual improvisatory solos, anchored between the repeated rondo sections. The need to play as an ensemble and so, to keep a timeline fostered leadership and cooperative behavior. The timeline keeper was one of the most difficult and responsible jobs, though it seems easy. The person who leads the work chanteys (the timeline keeper) on boats often makes more money, as he has the responsibility of setting a good working beat for the entire crew. The music my students were creating also needed leadership and teamwork to foster a cohesive group product independent of the teacher. Amazingly, it worked much of the time for my seventh graders, who, I was later told, were the most difficult students the seventh grade team had had in twenty-five years. I stored this experience away somewhere in my subconscious and it later manifested itself in the development in the teaching of bones¹ and later, a student jug band program.

Another unit I experimented with was a “drama in opera” unit. I learned this drama teaching technique from a workshop given by a drama group (name escapes me) at an open house at the Wang Center in Boston, Massachusetts. The technique is powerful, and I recommend that you think carefully before you try it as it can be quite cathartic for young adults, and can almost become something like psychodrama. A narrative under study with a good problem is needed to use this technique.

¹ Bones are an ancient instrument found in many folk cultures. Bones playing is discussed later in my MMEA presentation notes.

To perform the exercise, choose a pivotal stopping point in the story and stop. Have chairs set out in a circle labeled with the names of the characters. Establish a committee with a representative (who sits in the marked chair in the circle) for each character. The committee that sits behind the representative) will help the character understand his viewpoint in this particular situation. The characters speak, with the committee coaching from behind. All perspectives are explored, and the characters engage in dialogue about the situation and even take on more than one viewpoint, since don't we all have more than one thought about situations often enough?

I used this technique with my eighth grade classes around the American opera "Tender Land," by Aaron Copland, featuring young adults at a turning point in their lives. It is set during the Depression, when a profound sense of rootlessness pervaded part of the culture. A sense of despair about the future pervaded, and that is something young people understand today. In this case we were reading aloud and listening to the opera as well. The pivotal point I chose in this case was the moment when the young girl has to make a choice: stay with her parents or leave with the young drifter she thinks she is in love with who has been working in exchange for room and board in her parents' home.

When my classes performed this exercise, some of the participants got heavily involved to the point of assuming the role of different characters and moving from chair to chair, commenting on the nuances of the different characters position, and how indeed, some of the characters may have been experiencing conflicting emotions or viewpoints which would have affected their position. The exercise clearly touched on themes these young adults related to in their own lives. This proved to be powerful for both the actors and those of us who simply witnessed or were committee members, and a deeper understanding of the storyline and emotional subtext ensued.

This later led to a deeper exploration of opera, particularly set opera and an exploration of how opera tells not simply a narrative story, but the story of the emotions of the characters. The freezing of a scene and in-depth exploration with extemporaneous and expressive language allowed for a far deeper understanding of the story and for felt connections to the lives of the participants who explored the story. In turn, because of the personal exploration made by the students, they were far more able to make a connection between these stories and their own lives, and to perceive the relevance of “classical art” and art making in their lives.

During this time, an old friend, Adam Klein, who was now an opera singer and Appalachian musician was back in contact and offered to give a concert at the school. He sang opera and Appalachian music for the students, with the theme of “Storytelling Through Ballad and Opera,” and so, a new strand of inquiry was begun: the self-conscious linking of folk music to classical music, in this case opera. Oddly, this too is an important focus of Kodály pedagogy. One of the big differences between opera and ballad is that ballad is generally a straightforward “just the facts, ma’am,” rendition of a story. A ballad in fact is not a song, but narrative poetry, usually set in song now, and though most people think of ballads as songs, they are not. They are narrative/poetic stories of classic life tales. Essentially the same stories can be found in many cultures and in opera as well. They are quite musical and sometimes include refrains. Ballads, like opera, often touch on visceral stories of love, death, loss, incest and more. These are familiar themes to children in their lives although we often shield them from the written expressions of these life experiences in schools. An arena I did not explore, but am reminded of now while writing, is the popular “rock ballad,” a form with which students are somewhat familiar.

At this point we had also become extremely interested in the children’s interest in bones

playing. Bones are an ancient instrument found in many folk cultures. They are similar to spoons but a bit more difficult to play. Children were fascinated by the bones and wanted to learn, so we began to figure out how to teach bones. There are many different ways to teach that we researched and discovered, and so in this process I developed as a serious pedagogue. (This is one of the three precepts of a Kodály practitioner.) I went to many workshops about how children learn and observed hundreds, thousands of children over time, learning a great deal about how to teach the bones in many different ways.

Bones are wonderful instruments as they are affordable, portable, and, when handmade, are works of art. Importantly, they can be somewhat subversive in a school setting. Also, for the more sensitive musician, the opportunity to manipulate timbre and for the advanced to even play *a scale or a melodic fragment on the bones* is profound. In the larger community, bones motivate children to learn, especially to learn to keep a steady beat so that a child can at the very least play in on the beat. This in turn fosters a community and culture of music making in the classroom. Students can participate in a rudimentary or advanced level, or anything in-between. At the time of this exploration, teachers wanted to try it as well, and so a connection between students and teachers was drawn, with students at times teaching the teachers. This is where I really started to look at the issue of culture in the school. If the culture supports music and music making and takes an active interest, it is possible to do much more.

An elaboration of the uses of folk and classical (opera) music came when Adam came to a second school where I was teaching. The notion of culture also expanded in the opera and classical arena. It was more important than I initially realized to bring opera, especially with an artist the caliber of Adam Klein, to the schools. In fact, the opera piece developed strength quite by accident. One year when Adam was visiting and focusing on bones and Appalachian music, a

savvy teacher invited him to visit her class, which developed a unique relationship between Adam, the class and that teacher *outside* of the environment of the music room. While there, the children discovered that he sang opera and asked for a demonstration, which he gave. The experience was visceral – sound traveled throughout the school, carried by ancient pipes and more. The children were stunned and loved it and so, stunned ourselves by the response, we started to develop a strong opera component, which also motivated the children to actively work on their own singing. This was particularly important for the boys, who often take the tack that singing and opera is for girls, but in this experience finally understood singing as a powerful and indeed *athletic* event, requiring great prowess.

As the opera program developed I found that I was not just educating the children; I was educating the teachers. I did not realize this, but for numerous teachers, this would be their first encounter with opera. This had a significant impact, and made faculty more open to the experience of music as important in their own relationship to the culture of the school. Many teachers started to look forward to the annual concert when Adam visited which Adam or both of us gave, and which also included the students at times. This concert would represent a synthesis of our most recent work with the children, our work as Little Blue Heron and his current professional challenges or interests. Faculty were chagrined if they had to miss the concert for a professional meeting or other work obligations.

And so the notion of and direct experience of serendipity – I could not have predicted the numerous strands of possibility that resulted from the simple idea of a concert for the children. Yet, when it was there, I pursued the possibilities, awed by the impact and the possibilities unfolding in front of me and wondering what else might be possible.

Later, in Brockton, Massachusetts, the opera and ballad story telling theme became more

sophisticated. Adam and I designed and performed concerts together and as part of a duo, Little Blue Heron (LBH). We included the children in the concerts, and even developed a jug band – an idea that came to me suddenly. The jug band was inspired by an article by David Zorn (1973), “*Effectiveness of Chamber Music Ensemble Experience*,” which appeared in the Journal of Research in Music Education. The article made a profound impression on me. It summarized research conducted by the author that demonstrated that performing ability, cognitive learning, confidence and attitude were all improved through participation in a chamber ensemble experience. Chamber music is an intimate music-making experience. It is a small ensemble that works together. The ensemble can have coaching from an outside person, but essentially the group solves its own musical challenges and makes its own musical decisions. This is in direct contrast to larger ensembles in which the conductor is the artistic interpreter and generally the main decision maker. This study led me to think about how a chamber music experience could be designed for younger children, and this is when jug band came to mind, which has proved to be wildly successful, particularly with the children of about seven years old.

The jug band became a popular after school program, and I introduced it to children during regular music class. Even later in my career, in Lexington, Massachusetts, the after-school jug band program became extremely popular, and a real band that actually had regular annual gigs was born. Parents played in the band as well, and, again, the intergenerational model assumed importance. The jug band presented at Massachusetts Music Educators Conference on more than one occasion, and music teachers were excited to learn something new from children. A highlight for the children was the opportunity to teach and share with music teachers, creating a musical community intent on music-making with joy and excitement. This transcended the classic teacher-student relationship one generally experiences in a school setting.

Concurrent with these developments was an internal and external call to develop my own personal artistry. (This is a second precept of the Kodály musician model “Pedagogue, Scholar, Artist.”) I felt it to be important to offer my students the model of my performing as an artist for them, risk-taking and open to critique, and at the same time felt a need to pursue and keep my own art alive and refreshed – this to nourish me after days of nourishing my students’ art-making. I sang with a baroque ensemble, Ensemble Suave, which performed seldom heard music at baroque pitch A=415, and used baroque instruments – a harpsichord and a baroque cello. Even the technique for playing or singing in this style was somewhat different than standard classical music technique. Ensemble Suave had a heavy concert schedule and played in many New England venues. Concurrently, Little Blue Heron also performed and recorded. Little Blue Heron, which formed as an outgrowth of Adam Klein’s and my experiences working together with the children, became a duo in its own right. The duo became dedicated to performing mostly Appalachian and original music truly acoustically and in a somewhat authentic style. However, Little Blue Heron allowed its members’ classical and formal music training to influence our arrangements. As we worked on these, we found more and more relationships between the folk and classical music. We deepened our research and thus “Scholar,” the third precept of the Kodály music educator was born.

Little Blue Heron deeply researched the songs it used. We compared variants, transcribed songs from informants, and discussed styles. In fact, a scholar in England who was tracing the path of just that one song across the world in all its unusual incarnations contacted us about one song in our repertoire, “The Last Leviathan” by Andy Barnes. It is sung as a traditional folk song but is in fact a *composed song*, originally an English cathedral choir piece that has been transformed into a near folk song, passed aurally across the Atlantic Ocean. This

song is the story of the last whale alive after hunting, but it is really a metaphor about the ravages of war in our lives. It has a haunting melody and the language that speaks directly to the heart.

We found many songs that were related in some way to each other, either by tune or text, and found songs that had undergone huge transformations. As part of this process, we took a trip to the Carter Family Fold Festival. (The Carter Family has recorded and created many songs now popular and represent one strand of Appalachian music.) There we listened to the Carters and other musicians of the same tradition on stage, visited with the Carters, and sang for them as well. All this authentic research infused the folk music with rich life, which the children responded to with great joy.

Returning to the playing of the bones, I continued to teach bones and present workshops on bones playing and jug band for children at Massachusetts Music Educators Association (MMEA) conferences and became an active participant in the Rhythm Bones Society (RBS), an organization founded to promote and document bones playing. I became the editor of “The Young Bones Player,” a column in RBS’s quarterly newsletter, and argued for a more active and committed approach to involving and teaching children how to play. I also proposed that bones be designed that were easier for children to use with their smaller and sometimes less coordinated hands. My school became a testing site for different models of bones designed by members of the RBS youth bones committee.

It was during this time that I became more aware of and amazed by the power of the culture establishing in my school that valued art. It made it easier and more interesting to do things, and general classroom teachers took a more active interest in their students’ music making. They might pause to chat while picking up their class and find out what the children were working on. Some came early to pick up their students and sat in the back, watching and

even sometimes commenting on the children's work or partner teaching with me for a few minutes. This did not happen all at once, but in small and larger waves. I was awed by the groundswell. It was pointed out to me that my students were not just studying music – that I had built a culture of children who were responsive to music. The attentiveness of my children as audiences was often commented upon by visiting artists and other performers. It is not that I did not understand this, but I was too close to the trees to see the forest. One parent brought me to a presentation and had me stand back and observe. The whole room of children was musical and joyful and attentive. It was one body, in a sense. It was then that I understood about the power of culture building and what it can offer in a profound manner. I still hold that image of the children in that school, joyful, attentive, listening and having their music. For as Zoltan Kodály might say, music is the birthright of children. A culture established to that degree is strong and will only be altered with difficulty. I have since witnessed this manifestation at other schools of mine. My principal at my current school said he had never seen anything like it when our school closed our winter concert standing and singing together, joyously, vociferously. One day, spontaneously, the entire school, while waiting for the bell for line-up time, wound as a snake while singing outside. Even I, who thinks I understand the power of music, was stunned when I saw that.

It was during this time that I also became much more self-conscious about developing “bang for buck” strategies, involving iconic body and symbol language. This was used to quickly but directly and explicitly teach songs and concepts, and to give directions and commands with out altering the flow of the lesson or music –making. I read a great deal about metaphor and analogy, and still consider it to be one of the most powerful tools a teacher can use in tandem with developing the *culture or context* within which music is taught or experienced.

Edwin Gordon had a profound influence on my thinking about *the context in which music is taught or experienced*, although I also transposed his ideas to deal with culture as well.

Concurrent with this work on iconic representation came the start of my studies at the Kodály Music Institute. This study taught me so much about pattern, sequencing, the use of good folk music, use of the mother tongue of the musical culture and patterns of your students, and importantly, developmental approaches to work with sequencing an understanding of pattern in music. Kodály training is in depth, and at its best, one starts to develop a way to find the commonalities, differences and elaborations between all musics. This is called the weave. Use of the weave is the hallmark of a true practitioner and dramatically increases bang for the buck in all ways. As a teacher who has finally become fairly proficient at this, I have the joy of watching my students *independently* practice the same weave in class. This profoundly affects one's understanding of music: I know that my understanding of even simple songs has increased dramatically. When one studies Kodály, one finds out just how much there is to actually truly know about something, and how many ways there are to know it.

During this time I also returned to opera. One of the most moving things I witnessed was the response of children to Adam's rendition of Peri's "Orpheus" song – his song of longing and a desire to return to earlier times and to be reunited with his wife. The song was not vocally dramatic, was in fact fairly simple, and yet children were moved. There was clearly a possibility of creating a music experience that involved the retelling of Orpheus' story. This is something I may get to do in the coming year, as my students who will be creating a musical are well versed in some of the Greek myths and wish to retell them. I have an idea about how to find appropriate music for them, since much of Greek music from that time is lost to us. We can also work with the concept of a Greek Chorus. I worked on the Greek Chorus in a retelling of Antigone's story

with a former group. The students created their own dramatic orchestra with simple instruments, voice and song, which functioned as commentary and subtext during the telling of Antigone's story, and was extremely powerful.

What I have witnessed and partaken of and continue to find is that there is a spiral of experience that cycles eternally. One has the opportunity to revisit serendipity again and again, but one must be open to it and catch the bright wave, to revisit, explore and develop more experiences for teaching and learning that fit the particular culture of the time and situation. The act of persistence, the witnessing of what is unfolding and where the tendencies and interests are, encouraging and nurturing them as well as the act of letting go, can create enormous depth and richness to a culture of music for a school or community.

* * * * *

The Program in Critical and Creative Thinking has afforded me the space to persist through serendipity, indeed to name that as what I was doing. The Program also provided continuing support while my journey, including my Kodály studies which resulted in attaining a Kodály Teaching Certificate, delayed the completion of this synthesis of practice and theory. The rest of my Practitioner's Portfolio consists of description, discussion, and reflection on the developments introduced in this introduction.

PART II
THEMES AND THREADS

The next three chapters represent persistent or emerging undercurrents informing my theory and practice.

THOUGHTS AND EVENTS THAT HAVE INFLUENCED ME

Centonization: In early music, this is the process of creating new music from established musical patterns. This way of composing from early times that has existed in one form or another continues to fascinate me, and in part is probably one of the reasons I became so attracted to the Kodály methodology. Kodály identifies and extracts patterns common to the culture of the music of the culture and, once identified, locates them in various ways and forms (inversion, retrograde, diminution, augmentation, mensurated and more). It also helps to see how these patterns are recombined and present in all forms of music.

Truck Driving: A long-term fascination from childhood. When a truck is traveling, due to its long rectangular shape, in order to make a turn (curve), it has to execute a series of straight lines that continuously angle towards the new point. It is a sort of representation of $.999999\dots$ (or $9\text{bar} = 1$). The gradual fractal shift of the straight line creates the desired curve. This process is a physical analogue of $.9\text{bar} = 1$.

Leverage: Leverage relates to the above. In the physical world it is of particular interest to me as a short person. I have used the principles of leverage to great effect, astonishing people by what I have been able to move or shift on my own. I think this primal interest also translates to leverage in the life of teaching. What will give a more powerful result for the action I generate? In this case the “short person” is myself given the limited contact I have with the children as a music specialist without daily classroom contact with the same group of children.

Major Second Interval: This interval, considered dissonant -- unpleasant to our ears and needing resolution to a more pleasant and stable interval --in our culture, is a consonant (pleasant and stable, needing no resolution) interval in the Bulgarian music culture. (This

contrast raises the question of context -- What is new to some is old to others, etc.) I have always loved the interval. The overtone series of the two sounds are non-identical, which means that when the notes are played simultaneously, a rich sound is generated. The overtones do not cancel each other out, but enrich each other with contrasting sound waves. Bells that are played simultaneously, in church for example, are often a major or minor second apart. The minor second maintains that same functional difference in the overtone series.

“Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird,” a poem by Wallace Stevens and Smilla’s Sense of Snow, by Peter Hoeg: A poem and book, respectively, that also work with many ways to look at the same thing, and the state of being of the observer as well.

“And the peace of God which passeth all understanding,”: This phrase is found in religious Christian music and sometimes in the service as well. To me, a person who is not religious, the phrase expresses that which is beyond knowing, the desire to transcend, and the idea that it is not possible to know everything, and the smallness of ourselves in the universe.

Leonard da Vinci and Freud: Freud’s analysis of da Vinci’s personality (Freud 1922), based on a translation of a recurring childhood dream, which was translated from Italian to German. In the translation process, the kind of bird was translated incorrectly and the bird used instead (and incorrectly) was interpreted with a specific cultural meaning. They got the wrong bird! This story reminds me of how a simple error can lead to much larger errors in understanding and interpretation in science and elsewhere, and how entire mythologies or belief systems can be created with erroneous material.

SOME WAYS TO THINK ABOUT SHAPING IN TEACHING

Shaping is the process of building an operant by reinforcing only those responses that are closest to it. When the operant we want is a response to a certain kind of stimulus (such as answers to questions), shaping also requires a "building" in the stimuli to be presented. The first questions given to students are not as complex as those we expect them to solve later. This breaking down of stimulus materials is a major part of the design of instructional materials. (Vargas 1977, 225.)

Shaping by successive approximations: A behavioral method that reinforces responses that successively approximate and ultimately match the desired response. (Cardwell 1996, 215.)

Shaping has a classic definition in behavioral psychology, but the term is used artistically as well: "to shape a phrase," "to shape the clay." The idea of "successive approximation" relates to the $.9 \text{ bar} = 1$ equation, and the struggle to approach infinity. "Shaping" as an act of shape shifters appears in a strain of our mythology and folklore -- The concept could be said to be part of "the contents or our collective mind." How can this idea be expanded upon in teaching?

Caldwell is referring to a Skinnerian concept and Vargas is B.F. Skinner's daughter. I should disclose that my father, Donald A. Cook, was a Skinnerian psychologist, who focused in the field of instruction, particularly self-paced instruction. I grew up with the prevalence of these topics surrounding me, as the house was often filled with graduate students and colleagues

working on weekends and more, in fascination with their topics, lurking at the feet of a charismatic master, my father. He thought nothing of discussing questions such as "Do chickens think?" "Does $.9\bar{9} = 1$?" during dinner and afterwards, as a postlude to the evening meal.

Having said that, it is also true that I experienced this in some ways with the utter boredom a child can have with the preoccupations of a parent. So the following sense of shaping as it might apply to teaching is more directly gained through studies in psychology for my teaching degree, comments of a music education teacher on motivating children, mini-courses and practice in "applied behavioral analysis" when working as a relief counselor in half-way houses, my own direct teaching experience, and meditations on the subject of motivating students without expending all one's energy. How does one proceed securely through steps toward an objective? Shaping gives some paths and answers while provoking more thought.

Skinner's behaviorist definition of shaping is something I have thought about and heard discussed. What follows are some of my ideas with regard to the application of concepts of shaping to teaching, and the very verb, "to shape." In teaching, I think of it as going from a gross or general piece of work to an eventually much more detailed execution of the same concept. The approach is what matters—The gross work first allows a student to get a big picture, and to slowly move closer to more demanding success. It is a process of infinite refinement similar to the equation, " $.9\bar{9} = 1$."

Edwin Gordon (1998), a theorist of musical pedagogy, speaks of "shaping" when he talks about working from "flow" movement to flicks of the body on the beat, to articulated steady beat performed by the body without the flow connection executed, now that it is internalized. In fact, he feels that sequence is the best way to get to a true internalized sense and execution of steady beat. The shaping event would be the transition from continuous movement to steady beat.

Good vocal work and control evolves from vocal “sirens”, “glides” and “swoops,” which then center on matching specific pitches. In both instances we are moving from a gross “approximate” behavior to a specific and refined outcome. A visual analogue of sound would change from a free scrawl to lines interrupted by points to discrete pitches notated on a music staff. In art, one works from gesture drawing, during which one goes for the raw outline, form, energy and torque to more detailed drawing, culminating in quite a detailed drawing or painting.

Shape shifters in mythology bring magic, alternate perspectives and solutions. But shape-shifters can cause other problems, such as meddling with the natural order of life. The Celtic shape-shifter, the silkie (the subject of “The Great Silkie”) is one of the most famous shape-shifters of all time. She stretches our conceptual boundaries as to the nature of reality. The “silkie” also speaks to the unknowable -- that which we can only grasp at or approximate “knowing.”

My personal experience with working in a structured free-form improvisatory setting has been rich. In my work with music teacher Marleen Montgomery, we experimented with improvisatory gesture in music and movement. This work would lead to a process of discovery of underlying motivations and creative impulse, and would eventually deliver a refined and powerful performance.

Montgomery’s concert productions were famous for the power to evoke a visceral response in an audience. They were satisfying for the performer as well—There was a sense of “completeness.” I believe that shaping from the gross to the detailed allows that sort of complete knowledge and formulation of knowledge to occur. How can we allow this to occur while teaching our mandated concepts in public school? How we can apply the concept of shaping to all fields of study?

NOTES ON ORTEGA'S THE DEHUMANIZATION OF ART

These notes on Ortega, (1968), The Dehumanization of Art represent some of my thinking about aesthetics and what it offers in thinking about teaching. The question of aesthetics in art making in school and the aesthetics of students, teachers, and other members of the school community concern me deeply. An appreciation of aesthetics allows me to work more freely. Being able to acknowledge differences of aesthetics such as different preferences of color among students in the classroom enhances my teaching environment. Once students understand that they are not expected to like everything as art, they relax. In fact one fifth-grade student, on a short essay question about Stravinsky, wrote that Stravinsky was a revolutionary, particularly in how he used orchestral color. He commented that Stravinsky was too revolutionary for him.

My notes on Ortega include some interesting ideas about perception, developments of thinking and understanding in the arts, and how different sectors of people react to them. I include some comments and question of my own [indicated by CC in brackets]. I often returned to these notes when thinking about music and teaching.

- Guyua - art from a sociological point of view art, new art has a social effect. It creates groups of people - the small group that will like the new art: art popular, not popular, and unpopular. Romanticism won the people and was prototype of “popular style” first-born of democracy, it was coddled by the masses.
- (The hostile majority) NEW MUSIC Art acts like a social agent which segregates and shapes mass of the many into two different castes of men --the hostile and not.
- New art ---split based in part in lack of understanding. Those who understand and those who don't.
- Unpopularity of new art, essentially, and by fate.
- New music proposes new aesthetic norms.
- “New art,” proposes itself to especially gifted minority. However romantic art, as new, appealed to everyone. (New art) yielding indignation. When someone dislikes a work of art but feels superior to it, *indignation does not result*, but when he does not understand it, indignation results. (Failure to understand.)
- Aesthetics--become interested in the human destinies portrayed in the art, they become real. *It is good if the illusion works.*
- Aesthetic pleasure: a state of mind essentially *undistinguishable from ordinary pleasure, but free from painful consequences.*
- Art, portrayal of *human experience vs. art as experienced through the pane of a window rather than what you see though the window.*
- Art as aesthetics -- In art, accept the imperative imposed by the time, don't go with personal taste/moralism –“obedience to the order of the day.”
- Each historic style can engender a certain amount of forms within a generic style it gets mined out.
- Closely connected tendencies of NEW ART (Debussy and his contemporaries)
- (Dehumanizing meaning perhaps a change from the Romantic notion of art)
- It tends to dehumanize art
- It tends to avoid living forms
- To see to it that the work of art is *nothing* but a work of art
- To consider art as play and nothing else
- To be essentially ironical
- To beware of sham (?) and hence to aspire to scrupulous realization
- To regard art as a thing of no transcending consequence
- (Question --How does it relate to the concept of the functionality of art? [CC])
- Scales of emotional distance - from liver (authentic experiencer) to observer of any given experience.
- Art/aesthetics must stem from “lived reality” this is the context of the art. E.g. the interpretation of the apple by a baroque painter, Cezanne, etc. a vestige of a lived form.
- Ideas are an experienced reality also.
- Do we think of the idea, or analyze the idea like a psychologist?
- The idea can FUNCTION as a means to think about an object OR can become the OBJECT itself and the aim of thinking.
- Aristotle -things differ in what they have in common --in common color, the difference being what color. (Edwin Gordon -noticing differences to teach a concept-[CC])
- If art dehumanizes reality, it goes against, and renders us separated from our daily world (but naturally we can't have this with out a thorough knowledge of our daily world –

[CC])

- We lose out imaginary intercourse, and are compelled to improvise other distinct forms of intercourse (sense-making?-cc), yielding ultra-objects --secondary sensibilities and passions that are called aesthetic sentiments.
- The dehumanizing act is more important in the art than the “product.” Create - the new form itself -- the journey is what is important, (“gestalt,” “in the moment” [CC]) and you cannot completely leave natural forms entirely but I suppose the EXPERIENCE of those forms is what has changed.
- To produce something that is not a copy of nature but produces substance of own takes genius, that illusive quality that becomes part of the dehumanizing process. Picasso tried the extreme of leaving natural form behind. In Ortega’s opinion, this did not work. (Why? Is it the shattering, the divorce from what we know? [CC])
- Our firmest convictions tend to be our most suspect. They mark out limitations and boundaries.
- (Pirsig says something like this in “Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.” He says this is because that which we take for granted we do not defend or uphold, but that which we are unsure of we tend to vocally defend.[CC])
- Perception of lived reality and perception of artistic form are essentially incompatible. Different adjustments of “perceptive apparatus.”

PART III
IN PRACTICE

The chapters that make up Part III present four exhibits of putting theory into practice.

DON GATO, A MEXICAN SINGING STORY, AS AN ENTRY POINT TO OPERA

I have always taught a little opera unit during the year with my students, and use a Mexican singing story and picture book, “Senor Don Gato,” to teach about opera, because it has the same dramatic elements as opera.

The story starts with Don Gato, a debonair cat of some social stature, on the roof of his house reading a love letter. He becomes so excited by the contents of the letter that he spontaneously falls off the roof and dies despite the best efforts of doctors galore, leaving the grieving lady cat, writer of the love letter. A great tragedy has occurred. But, as the grand funeral passes the market square, Senor Don Gato is miraculously restored to life by the smell of fish in the market.

The Don Gato story is like an opera in that it has a nobleman (Don Gato, dressed in a white ruff), a situation involving a letter, a balcony (in the picture book) from which his lady love witnesses his plummet to the ground, the dramatic shifts in heights established by the roof, balcony and the ground, a tragedy, a huge consultation of many people (doctors, like noblemen) over the “problem” (there is always a problem of some sort in opera), and then Don Gato’s death, despite great effort on the part of many people. It also contains a formal procession of people in the form of a funeral (again the book illustration) with profound grieving (the lady love is in black with a black mantilla) and comedy (the cat returns to life when he smells fish), resulting in a happy ending, reunited with his love. An earmark of opera is the quick and dramatic changes, of heights, emotions and storyline, and Don Gato contains all of these elements and is a story accessible to children of all ages. Additionally, the song can be sung quite dramatically, bringing it closer to the art form opera. To involve the students more, they

can join in singing the “meow, meow, meow” refrain. The story of Don Gato is a great favorite, and can be used with all ages to introduce the elements of opera. In fact, it has been arranged for middle and high school chorus as well. The direct transition to opera is made simple by the explicit and easily identifiable elements held in common by Don Gato and by opera.

OPERA AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE SCHOOL

Let me elaborate further on the power of opera in a public school, how it solved a common social issue in schools by involving students who hover on the fringe of school life to address an important school-wide problem. These students were part of a larger dramatic opera group that took on the issue of bullying. The school was able to name the problem and discuss it in a public manner without a punitive quality.

In the world, opera provides catharsis for the audience and depicts real-life dramas – unrequited love, star-crossed lovers (Romeo and Juliet), political intrigue that changes the world, (Don Carlo,) jealousy and obsessive love (Carmen) bargaining with your fate or desires (Faust) and more. Opera goers may attend opera to hear “the old story” in some way, with new artistry perhaps revealing a new dimension of an experience that rings true.

The particular case happened at a school after I had already established the presence of opera through the use of “Don Gato,” the performance and in-class visits of opera singer Adam Klein, and an introduction to “The Magic Flute,” by Mozart. “The Magic Flute” is a singspiel (or musical drama), which includes spoken dialogue, though it is also considered to be an opera. “The Magic Flute” is a wonderful next step after “Don Gato,” as the story engages children of all ages, the composition is excellent, and it details, though not explicitly, a drama between a mother and father figure, the Queen of the Night and the King Zorastro (ruler of the day, and some say, Pamina’s father) over the Queen of the Night’s daughter, Pamina. “Magic Flute” deals with visceral and conflicting family issues. Children can identify with this sort of drama from their own family life, and the vagueness and changeability with regard to the questions of who is good and who is evil. In addition to the numerous picture books depicting the story of “The Magic

Flute” and the music, I also used an adaptation of the story and music from *Classics for Kids*, a recording label. *Classics for Kids* adds a child protagonist, someone with whom children can identify, who is catapulted into the story as a participant and witness as the story is told.

The school counselor at one of my schools loved music and had become very interested in the culture of opera I was building. She proposed to build an opera-performing group of children of any age in the school (which was a kindergarten through fifth grade elementary school) that would create opera dramatizations of unresolved social issues plaguing the school.

Interestingly, this school was not an inner-city school, but a school in a wealthy suburb. Never the less the dominance of bullying in the school caused numerous students to refuse to attend school regularly. The group met and rehearsed, initially using opera music as a foil for their enactment of social issues occurring in the school, for example, exclusion from games during recess. They presented their performance at the weekly all-school meetings, attended by all students and teaching faculty and many parents.

At the moment of complete crisis in the dramatization, the children froze the frame. A discussion was held, with some commentary provided on the situation. Solutions for the social problem portrayed were elicited from the audience and a suggestion box was available during the week for students and faculty to share further suggestions as to possible solutions. The following week the group would re-enact the drama, then dramatically present several of the solutions that they had perhaps with some guidance from the guidance counselor or parent volunteer during discussion decided to share. The audience witnessed these possible solutions to real problems in the school and discussed the two or three they saw and had some open discussion about the solutions. These enactments were extremely popular, as was participating in the group. Interestingly, the group was composed to some degree of students who had not quite found a

place in the school community and drew from all ages. The group was extremely self-motivated and often rehearsed on their own, working quite cooperatively outside the school counselor's office.

NOTES FOR PRESENTATIONS AT MASSACHUSETTS MUSIC EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCES

This chapter includes some notes used for presentations given at the Massachusetts Music Educators Association (MMEA) conferences in 2005, 2006, and 2007. The first set of notes was for a presentation on Entry Points To Joyful Music-Making. The second set of notes were for presentations on the possibilities of a jug band as a vehicle for teaching music and building a music-making culture in the public schools.

All three years' presentations were highly successful. One major educator commented that it had been a long time since she learned something new at a presentation. Many teachers confided in me at other conferences that my presentation had given them the courage to dust off their traditional folk instrument (such as banjo or a mandolin) and use it in class. Others thanked me for what I had done for the inner-city child in music.

I was asked by music educators to present on jug band again in 2011, this time focusing on building the instruments, locating the materials needed, and how to play and teach the instruments. These notes do not refer, however, to these latest presentations.

Entry Points To Joyful Music-Making

Entry point #1: "Senor Don Gato" as Opera

Use the picture book, often to be found in the school library.

Parallels to opera:

- a. Drama
- b. Love story
- c. An important letter
- d. A balcony scene (Don Gato falls past the balcony where his love is standing in the book's illustration.)
- e. Tragedy (Don Gato can not be restored to life; weeping lady love)
- f. Important people holding a consultation (The doctors rather than courtiers or counsel of war nobles.)
- g. A Procession (the funeral procession)
- h. A comic ending (coming back to life from the smell of fish in the marketplace as his funeral procession winds through the market square) and
- i. A happy ending! (Reuniting with his love, which in the picture book, is on top of the roof where the story starts!)

If you are a "props" person, here is a golden opportunity.

Students will be able to name other stories they know that have a balcony scene – "Rapunzel," "Romeo and Juliet."

Children can start learning by singing the refrain, "Meow, meow, meow" and the "Don Gato" at the end of each line. As they learn the story they can chime in.

You can move to acting the whole story out. Some students can sing while others pantomime. It helps if the teacher is willing to be or go over the top.

Entry Point #2 Jug band:

From chiming in on the chorus to becoming a soloist or expert bones player, advanced as well as beginning players will have an entry point. Jug band instruments fascinate children. Children from Iran, Iraq and India have come to school after bringing their jaw harps home and shared that this is a folk instrument that their parents were familiar with in their country of origin. Email Constance Cook constancemcook@mac.com if you want more information about teaching techniques, especially bones or jaw harp, ideas on how to start a band, etc. Email Rob Rudin if you are looking for a jug band expert or for more ways to combine Orff and jug band:

Rob.rudin@gmail.com.

Demonstration by children of bones, jaw harp, wash tub bass, jug, etc. Have teachers join in singing chorus with the children.

Entry Point # 3 Community Singing:

Quodlibets:

"Hey ho/nobody home" (or Jean Ritchie's "What a Goodly thing"), "Wade on the water," "Wearing my Long Wing feathers as I fly," "Shalom Haverim." Teach any one of these as a round; teach another as a partner song. Keep adding songs. Children will think of other songs that might work. (This set was learned from Nick Page).

Many pentatonic songs can be partnered with other pentatonic songs: "Bow, Wow, Wow," (Erdei 1974, 18) and "Naughty Kitty Cat," a Hungarian children's song that has entered the

repertoire of American music educators.

Rounds and canons: Teach canon (end together on one note) versus round (each piece finishes at the end).

Ostinati: Repeated rhythm or melodic pattern, the simplest being a steady beat or the act of walking to a steady beat. Can be performed as body percussion, singing, moving, on Orff or other instruments. The refrain of “Skin and Bones” (m-r-d-l,) is a great example. It can be sung during the verse as well as the refrain.

Mensural canons: Sing the same song slower or faster – this is usually done twice as fast or slow, but some canons work with the factor being one of 3. I have gone no farther than this, but perhaps, especially with music of other cultures, there may be other possibilities.

Really fun! You can open up the question to the class – is this a round or a canon? Or not? Many pentatonic and mixolydian songs can be performed mensurally. What does this mean? It means one person or group can sing it 2 or 3 times more slowly than it is usually sung while another group sings it at a normal tempo.

This can be done with “Bow, Wow, Wow,” “Pumpkin, Pumpkin,” Hopi Butterfly song (grinding corn), “Apple Tree,” and more. (I have combined the three food related songs for a “fall harvest partner/canon singing experience.)

Children will start to figure out which songs might work and thus will also be developing their ear!

Bibliography

Erdei, Peter, editor, and Katalin Komos, principal collector. 1974. 150 American Folk Songs to sing read and play. New York: Boosey and Hawkes. *This orange book is every American Kodály teacher’s “bible,” or first source for material.*

Erdei, Ida, Knowles, Faith and Bacon, Denise, editors. 2002. My Singing Bird: 150 folk songs from the Anglo-American, African-American, English, Scottish and Irish traditions. Columbus, OH. Kodály Institute at Capital University.

For all grade and age levels with emphasis on middle and upper grades. Songs selected by the staff of The Kodály Center of America.

Webography

The American Folk Song Collection: <http://kodaly.hnu.edu/>. *This wonderful site has indexed songs and games and is searchable in many ways. It includes recordings of primary sources/informants when available.*

Children's Jug Band At Massachusetts Music Educators Association Conference 2007

Jug band performs. Acknowledgements and introductions to the teaching artists. Professional gigs. An introduction to the instruments. Some adaptations for children or players with fine motor challenges. Analogies. Chamber Music. Orff applications. What jug band offers as a powerful teaching model. "Vanish" as a teaching strategy. One way (of many) to teach harmony.

MMEA Jug band– 2nd presentation – developments and some strategies for teaching

INTROS, etc.

Jug Band Performs: "Take this hammer," "Stealin' " (with "vanish" cards, maybe)

Real Intros – self, Rob Rudin, percussionist

Jonathan Danforth bones historian, fiddle, Danforth's connection (JD is the grandson of Percy Danforth who popularized bones in this country. Many of the older players learned to play from PD.) Bones X Festival information (conference will have workshops for teachers and children)

Acknowledgements. Steve Adler, principal – Lexington support: Lynne Sarasin, Deputy Superintendent. PARENT VISION and HELP

Heather Kirby (SGMM) (Beth Bryant)

INFLUENCE of GORDON and WEIKART – Mention – Gordon at B.U. Weikart and Gordon points tried to bring out in hand out.

ANALOGIES (older and newer teaching sequences in the hand out: something to think about)

Visual analogues for bone positioning: smiley face, bowtie. Moon. You can create pictures as reminders.

Talk Fast – Gigs we've done – Lexington Education Foundation fundraiser; Mid-Summer Revels this year and last year; Bones Fest X; Walk for Arts Fund raiser at school. MMEA last year. Performance dates can galvanize participation and organization. Jug Band functions as a class and ALSO as a performing prep group. You can be in it and not perform, but generally, kids end up performing.

MAIN POINTS

Intro to the instruments

Jaw Harp (Asian/Mid-eastern history) and Kazoo

(Raeburn – good jaw harps and will cut you a deal.)

Percussion: Three Categories--scraper, shaker, strike)

Bones – strike category of percussion

Washboard -- scraper

Jug (pre-band brass mouth technique)

Washtub bass (wtb) – check ours out – geared for challenged motor skill issues, but there are many ways to build (variants)

Diddley Bow- One string blues guitar

Child versions of these instruments. Slides good for kids with fine motor skill problems.

Chamber Music as a way to increase student achievement as a musician (Journal for Research in Music Education article by Zorn.) What is jug band but another model a chamber group? I hear my students practicing outside during recess. I consider that to be “success.”

Immediate Participation at beginning and advanced levels, like ultimate frisbee.

Intergenerational. (Matt Belyea and others – parents who regularly; show up and play or sing in like Chloe’s dad, Maeve’s dad) Also, children of different ages.

Way to teach Blues –American Musical art form and carries history of African –American cultural influence in this country.

Rob Rudin: recorder, diddley bows. Orff approach on non-Orff instruments and recorder.

Demo: Kids play harmony and counter melody of “Midnight Special.”

“Vanish” as a rehearsal technique – from Angela Broeeker

In vanish, you chunk down the sections and create a visual analogue for each section, lining them up in a row: e.g. then as memory grows, you challenge them by removing the remainder of sections. A simple example of this is visual markers for a song with different verses and a chorus. The chorus is repeated, so is probably the first thing they will memorize. When close to memory, remove the marker for the chorus, leaving the space. Then proceed to remove the markers for the verses as the students gain mastery of the verses. You might start with the easiest verse or the first verse, if the verses are narrative in nature. It depends on what you think will work best. Sometimes its good to let the children pick the markers they want to remove. If you make it into a “challenge” game, it can be quite effective. Vanish is a powerful teaching too.

Do you need a sequence to teach harmony?

One sequence is to first identify the I chord, and have students perform a kinesthetic movement (agreed upon) each time they hear I, but on nothing else. (This is a form of authentic assessment.) When you see from the kinesthetic response that they hear “I,” then add V, with its own separate and unique kinesthetic response. When I and V are secure, add IV. An example might be, hands on lap for I, then hands on shoulders for V, and then IV might be on waist, physically between V, and I as it is harmonically.

Gordon and Larry (QUEENS College Silver Burdett and Ginn contributor) listening and response sequence

Break out -- learn instruments:

TEACH Midnight Special (PREVIEW extra beats on repeat)

Instruments: Bones, WTB, Jaw (Jew’ s) Harp, and Washboard

MAKE MUSIC Together

If you did not get a handout or music, Leave email and I will email you article and music.

“LITTLE SALLY WALKER”: AN EXPERIMENT IN BUILDING COMMUNITY

This chapter was originally written for a class in African-American Musicology. We were required to select a song from the African-American Diaspora, analyze it pedagogically in the Kodály method, (including researching the song’s culture) which is similar to an ethnographical analysis (as opposed to a classical music theory analysis), create a project with it, then document the work in a paper.

I chose “Little Sally Walker” because I had the experience learning the song and game from a primary informant, Pam Wood, who had learned “Little Sally Walker” directly from her mother in Surry, VA. This variant is close to or exactly the same as the Georgia Sea Islands variant, collected in Bessie Jones’s and Bess Lomax Hawes’s Step it Down. According to Dr. Rosita Sands of the Center for Research in Black Music in Chicago, music of and the very culture of the Georgia Sea Islands is in danger of dying. This makes me want to use it. It also appeals to me, the teacher, and children seem to love the singing games from that area, which gets them to participate. The cultural aesthetic of the music of the Georgia Sea Islands holds the concept of making and playing music with each other rather than against each other, which adds to the concept of building community through music-making.

I was working in a new district. The school where I conducted this project was not my main school, but a school that “belonged” to another teacher where I was teaching the classes he did not have time to cover in his schedule. I needed to establish a working and communal relationship with the children. We had a wonderful year and this project was part of that year. One further outcome was that the following year, while students prepared their fifth grade musical, their music teacher commented, “They dance! Where did they learn to do that?” I

responded, “I taught them.”

* * * * *

A variant of “Little Sally Walker “ was collected by Mrs. Pearl Henderson Wood in Surry County, Virginia. In this narrative I describe my current exploration and use of the variant to develop a sense of communal music-making, musical leadership, independence and to foster the joyful spirit of improvisation.

I started teaching in Norwood, Massachusetts, in a kindergarten through fifth grade program in late February of 2008. I noticed that there did not seem to be a strong relationship to singing or movement in the classes for which I assumed responsibility. The classes meet once a week, most for ½ hour, and some for 40 minutes. Grade four meets once a week for ½ hour as a class, and once a week for ¾ hour as a three massed classes (minus the band students). Grade five follows the grade four pattern of class meetings, but the massed class holds two class sections rather than three. The massed grade five class functions as a chorus rehearsal and is currently preparing a fifth grade musical revue.

Prior to this year, all grades except kindergarten had twice weekly ½ hour lessons, but I did not feel that this history was demonstrated in my initial contact with my classes. Having taken over classes in a previous district that had also had twice weekly ½ hour classes (except for the year preceding the year I assumed responsibility for the classes), I feel that I am in a very good position to judge what can be achieved with two ½ hour classes per week.

I decided to teach “Little Sally Walker” (LSW) to see if I could get the children to loosen up, reduce teacher support, and observe and help to develop leaders in the class. I wanted to see if children would start to sing independently and start to take over the improvisatory movement as well.

The Beginning – Fourth Grade

As my first group I started to teach a fourth grade that contained experienced singers and was generally responsive. What I had not factored in was that they were turning into fifth graders and had become more self-conscious, so I had to teach the game differently, but all that was required was a small adjustment and wait time. They would not go into the middle alone, *so I allowed three to four children at a time to go into the middle to start.* After a few days of playing in this manner, and getting accustomed to the game, one boy announced, “Okay, I am ready to try it by myself.”

I announced to the class that we were going to go to the next level. *I asked them how they thought the game could be played in a more challenging manner, or what the next step with this game would be.* They correctly identified “one person in the middle” and singing by themselves. They proceeded to try it. This class has now come to the point where they can not only can play but also sing LSW with minimal-to-no teacher support. There are child leaders who keep the game and song going. There is even an advanced singer who almost raps and provides social commentary, addressing the current “Sally” in correct relation to the beat, exhorting Sally to rise, or to “shake it,” etc. This class plays LSW and can carry on playing with children no longer refusing to join in.

I think that *the act of repeating the game and continuing to play reinforced this development.* I notice that children do tend to act out some of their concerns and terrors when they are the center person, as Pam Wood suggests -- When they are in the center of an accepting circle, they are free to leave their cares in the center. This class has an active open circle (social skills curriculum) practice, which may have fostered the sense of ease that came relatively

quickly to this circle.

The Development: Where it went with different ages and needs

Younger classes were much quicker to jump into the game and take turns being Sally alone in the middle, but took a great deal of pleasure in joining in the movements on the perimeter of the circle, and I let them do that. This makes me think of the concept of alone. I think children unaccustomed to playing these games feel very alone, and not part of the community of music-makers when they try being in the middle. It is a challenge. *Seeing the other children echoing their movement seems to help them feel able to participate fully, and they relax and enjoy it.*

Quite a few students had trouble with the movement for “let your backbone slip” so I *isolated that motion and we practiced it separately*, in both directions. *We also practiced “shake it to the east” and “shake it to the west.” I also started to just teach the movements before asking the children to try the game in the circle. Children would practice, randomly scattered in the room.* I realize that this breaks with the tradition of learning in the circle, and the sense of ritual. However, I think it allowed children to get greater ease with the motions and the song without feeling on the spot. Having developed a relationship with the song and dance on their own, they had something to do when they got to the middle. One student asked, “Do you have to shake to one side first?” I said, “No, in this game that order does not matter, but there are games when where the order of the same movements does matter, like this one.” I taught them the hanky-folding pattern (first fold, opposite fold, third fold, opposite fold) for Johnny Brown, which really interested them, and then I taught them “Johnny Brown.” *The cultural question gave an entry point to another circle game, and now they have two that they know. They are still*

in the process of acquiring mastery of “Johnny Brown.”

It’s difficult with some of my larger classes, because we don’t always have time for everyone to have a turn, and that seems to disturb the rhythm and the joy. They are not ready to break into two smaller circles because they are not yet independent. I think I need to say, “ We will play ten turns,” or however many we have time to give that day. It’s still not ideal. I might suggest playing or finishing outside during recess. Eventually I might extract the do-mi-sol pattern for the older children who might be ready for it, or the do-la,-so, (do to low la and low sol) pattern. I have been extracting (making conscious) the vocal slide and the swung style, both difficult for some children to maintain. In future songs with swung beat, LSW will be good to refer to as the children love it so much, and are having such a visceral experience with it.

Fifth grade has been taught LSW again to build ease with each other and ease in performing for each other as they approach the date of their play performance. They clearly see it as relaxing and pleasurable. We did have one stressful incident, when a boy did not want to go into the middle of the circle, and the children were taunting him. I had a discussion with the class about being aware of the circle, of who is ready to take a turn in the middle, and who is not, and also being aware of who has had a turn, and who has not yet had a turn.

There is a profound lack of awareness among some children of some of these factors. I would say that one of the concepts taught by LSW and other circle turn-taking games are awareness of the group, and your place in it. This seems to be quite difficult for some children, so I think it is worth it to spend much more time in this arena. I actually ask the children now, “Why do we play this game in a circle,” and it is fascinating what the answers are. “To help us learn it better,” “ so that everyone can have a turn,” etc.

Another concept or skill that had to be practiced was choosing and getting to a person

during “shake it to the very one that you love the best.” The children were unaccustomed to choosing someone by the end of the song, and instead waited for the song to be over, and then picked. So I actually practiced singing and getting to someone on the last line, and then said, “That’s what you have to do when you are in the middle of the circle.”

The Current Status/Conclusion

In varying degrees, all classes are moving towards independence from the teacher and are playing and singing LSW on their own. More continuous work on movement and improvisation should continue, as some dancing is not yet truly relaxed.

The Culture

The reading I have done suggests that the saucer refers to an English fertility rite of jumping over a saucer. This is not something I would bring up with children. In any case, it is not necessarily substantiated. And along with that is the question, if the saucer rite is true, is the question of why Sally is crying in a saucer – did she get stuck in this rite? Is she unsuccessful in this arena? This is not clear, and "waiting for the man to bring her a dollar" also suggests a sexual connotation. But then again, it could be her boss, paying her or not paying her. The part that makes it African –American is the styling – the swung rhythm, the anticipation of the beat, the syncopation, and the physical movements accompanying the song. Children generally recognize it as African –American, and we can talk about some of the attributes. I don’t feel I have a deep understanding of the cultural context of this song. I suppose one could present it as a song game played in the yard or playground. One might encourage people to act out their feelings and frustrations. I feel the song is quite positive and is about resistance and recouping

from the stresses of life and looking outward and forward, and moving on. This is what I would choose to stress after the initial acting out of troubles. In addition, I would stress the ability to maintain awareness of the circle, who is ready to take a turn, who has not yet had a turn, and who is indicating lack of readiness to have a turn. While building the game, the slower or more reluctant participants have to have permission to be “not ready yet” for this period of time.

The Elaboration – Where one might go further

Children could learn “Johnny Brown,” Green Fields, Roxie,” (both also from the Georgia Sea Islands), and other circle games, continuing to develop leadership, a repertoire of singing and improvisation games, and extracting solfege², making solfege comparisons as they go, and building their musical experience and vocabulary, becoming more and more independent over time. I would like every class to be able to play these games without me. It would be great to have children of different ages meet to play these games, or have a book buddy musical sharing. This actually happened through serendipity today, and is something I want to plan to have happen again.

I would like to layer in more circle games, in including "Green Fields, Roxie," focusing on choosing the next person in time, and more on the cultural connections --Where do children sense this song came from? Why would children play it? We could draw on Sandi Nicolucci’s list: “Seven Attributes of African Music:" folk vocal style, improvisation, polyrhythm, ostinasti, percussion, syncopation, and call and response for discussion. I often find that African – American children seem to have a more immediate and visceral understanding of African-

² Solfege is a pedagogical solmization technique for the teaching of sight-singing in which each note of the score is sung to a special syllable, called a solfège syllable (or "sol-fa syllable"). The seven syllables commonly used for this practice in English-speaking countries are: do (or doh), re, mi, fa, sol (or so) la, and ti/si.

American singing games and this fascinates me. How can that be allowed to flourish and develop? I want to build intergenerational singing games, so my final thought after the experience of that happening by accident is to go outside during recess and try to set up a group and see what happens. I would then encourage them to do this without me.

Addendum: Mutable Explicit Teaching Sequence

This sequence changes depending not just on age, but also on the ability and focus of the group. It also varies according to the space in the room and is informed by the Weikart teaching model of “separate, simplify, facilitate.” Start with a demonstration of my singing and acting, but gesture to them to join me. State, “Everybody sit down in your saucer, but sit down so that you can easily get up.” Then begin, taking them through the game. The group can either be in a circle or scattered. I may be in the middle, turning occasionally to keep the focus and so that everyone can see what I am doing.

I might go through the whole thing once, then pause to review certain parts – “backbone slip,” “shake it to the very one that you love the best” (get them to improvise their own thing), practicing to get to someone else on the word “best.” I might direct teach phrase by phrase with accompanied motion and continue to add on cumulatively. I have had as yet, no need to do this, but I might start with teaching the hardest part first, and then grow out from that. In this case, the most difficult language, melody and motion would be the “backbone slip” section as well as the improvisatory section. However, I tend to let the improvisatory section develop, as people are ready to take a chance in the circle.

After I have taken them through it in one of these ways, or during this process, I would assess whether they are having trouble with singing a section. If so, I would explicitly and

directly teach that again, asking them to listen and echo as opposed to the more holistic and developmental chime-in as you are ready approach. I move between these two approaches, depending on the needs of the room. (I got this concept of the two teaching modalities and the technique of moving between them from research of Dr. Clark Saunders of Hartt School of Music). I let some errors go, giving wait time, or commenting on what needs to change, again giving wait time. At a certain point, if needed, I ask them to just sit and sing the song straight through with me (undistracted by the drama) to make sure they are clear on the song.

After both a comfort zone and a knowledge base has been established, we move to direct playing of the song game. We gather in a circle and at this point I announce, “I am going to be Sally Walker.” I enter the middle of the circle, and say, “Will you sing for me?” and start the song. *So at this point, I am establishing that they have an important role in the execution of this song and in the center person’s performance.* I might ask before I start, once in the center, “What happens when I stop in front of someone?” (They go into the middle of the circle.) “Where do I go?” (I go into his or her place.) Then we start and keep going. I try not to let it fall apart, and continue, even if they are late picking someone, so that they catch up into the rhythm of the game.

With classes that have a shyness factor, I let several people go into the middle so they are not alone. This seems to work well, and I also remind people to be sensitive and make sure everyone who wants a turn gets one. Also if people really don’t want to go in, I let them stay on the edge of the circle. I focus on “How can we know these things without talking or stopping the game?” and they come up with strategies. But, if the group of children probably doesn’t need this discussion, I don’t have it.

If we are not going to have time for everyone to have a turn, I try to let the class know in

advance, and we pick up where we left off next time. To keep the song fresh and our voices fresh, I might raise the key as we go as Betty Hillmon modeled in an African-American Musicology class.

Moving into independence

When I feel they might be ready, I ask them to play it without me. I might talk about how you choose the pitch, or if someone naturally chooses a good pitch, I might comment on it afterwards – “What makes this a good note to start the song on?” The students analyze and respond, e.g., “We have to go lower or higher later on,” building an understanding of the capabilities of their vocal ranges.

Final Steps -- Closure

Perform as is culturally correct, informing class that THIS is how the game is played, asking them to identify what culture this song is from. (African-American, and more specifically, the Georgia Sea Islands, which retains an intact and independent culture, with more direct lines to Africa.) When they get it, ask them facilitating questions about what makes it this way. For example, “Tell me something about the rhythm that makes it this way.” “Does this song have a leader?” “Do we always sing exact pitches in this song?” If someone is demonstrating natural dance movement or clapping style, point that out. The clapping usually comes much later, as comfort zone is established, so I tend to let them play it for a while and then add in the clapping patterns.

Little Sally Walker seems to be a singing game that all ages can relate to and grow from in many ways without tiring of the song or game. I recommend this kind of work to build the

learning climate of the classroom.

Sources

From Jonathan Rappaport, variants of Little Sally Walker:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?>

<http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&VideoID=30554272>

<http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&videoid=27533227v=43-xvi5R1T0>

Variant sung by Pete Seeger:

<http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/listen2.aspx?type=preview&trackid=28501>

Mudcat discussion on the origins of Little Sally Walker:

<http://www.mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=83749&messages=11>

Caribbean variant sung by Taj Mahal:

<http://www.rhapsody.com/-/artist/taj-mahal/album/shakin-a-tailfeather/track/little-sally-walker>

PART IV
STEPS AHEAD

Having departed for some time from the direct-investigative, yet open-ended work of the synthesis to pursue the detailed and rigorous work of the Kodály certification program, I find I have now arrived at a moment of unity in my Critical and Creative Thinking (CCT) Program work -- inquiry into serendipity, persistence, and building a culture of music in a public schools and the Kodály model of teaching: *Scholar, Pedagogue and Artist*. In order to develop as a teacher, I felt compelled to acquire better and more specific pedagogy. I also strongly felt that, as educators, we can not ask our students to perform for us unless we ourselves as teachers are willing to bear a similar risk and model that performing for our students. In the case of musical studies, the performance is in fact real performing, and we must be willing to do that in front of our students and colleagues. Kodály studies have given me sequential and developmental methods of teaching, and the understanding of the responsibility of performing as an artist in front of my students, thus becoming transparent. Critical and Creative studies have allowed me to develop a ceaseless open-ended dialogue with *myself* and others, colleagues and students alike, allowing me to continuously examine and alter my work and process and so attempt to improve and refine my teaching. It was in fact this process, that compelled me to develop my own artistry and I produced two CDs while also engaged in experimental and project-based teaching.

My working conditions have changed several times. At times I have experienced the joy of greater contact, with the opportunity to teach twice weekly (half-hour lessons) with an additional community singing opportunity at weekly all-school meetings. However, I am now

back to teaching once weekly lessons which is the generally the norm in the United States. In addition, pressures and devaluing of music and the arts created by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment (MCAS) mean that, ideologically, music has lost some of the status it formerly had. At best, it can be viewed as assistance to improving students' achievement in math and English language arts -- in particular math. It is not well known that the popular "Mozart effect" has been now debunked (Waterhouse 2006). However other studies do show some correlation between the study of music and improved achievement in mathematical studies and test scores as well as English literacy test scores (Gardiner 2000) At worst, music is viewed as "needed relaxation" from the demands of preparing for tests or even as an inconvenient "frill." One of the main reasons music continues to exist in public schools is that the music (or art or physical education or library) period provides classroom teachers with a contract- mandated preparatory period free of contact duty.

So years later, with once weekly classes or, if lucky, a slightly higher frequency, the challenge remains – what will give bang for the buck? How can we capture the imagination of the children so that *they will carry music outside of the classroom into the rest of their lives?* The challenge of maintaining tenacity over time remains the same. Opera, bones and other experiments in teaching gave some answers, and the developmental and sequential teaching model offered by Kodály gives additional answers. However, there is still more to be done in terms of building a broader culture that supports the participation of children and adults in music and the arts.

During the last year, I had two teaching situations. I teach elementary music halftime in Norwood, Massachusetts to grades one through five. I am lucky to have a pilot program so that I can teach a pure Kodály program (with some accommodation for Norwood's musical practice

and expectations). I also taught one day a week in the Jackson-Mann School in Allston, Massachusetts through the Metropolitan Opera Guild's Boston Urban Voices (BUV) program. There my students were essentially grades four and five and had not had music previously. I had to devise a curriculum that taught quickly but effectively and also met the guidelines and expectations of the BUV mission.

The pilot program in Norwood is supported in part by the Kodály Music Institute, which funds regular meetings between a Kodály master teacher, Susan Cleveland, and myself. One important next step I have not been able to take and will continue to address (and this step is a goal of the music department head as well) is to secure funding for Dr. Martin Gardiner of Brown University to conduct his research on the relationship between Kodály and standard music instruction on achievement in math and English language arts.

To meet the challenge of increasing contact with the students and general cultural presence of music, I have some thoughts as to next steps: I am creating musical "primers" that could be used by classroom teachers who are willing to test and use them in the general classroom. They could be used in support of the English literacy goals of the classroom teacher but because of how they are designed, would also support some of the subliminal preparatory music learning in the Kodály method. My mentor reviewed my primers and suggested I create a CD that teachers could use so the model of child voice with correct tuning and range choice would be in the classroom and so that teachers not confident of singing with their students would have a supportive resource. I am not yet sure if making some sort of primer for my older beginners at the Jackson-Mann is possible, but I am just starting to think about the notion.

This next idea has proven difficult to enact: I would like to have more singing in both my schools. In Norwood, if I can not get us to sing together weekly or monthly in an assembly, I

would like to have us sing patriotic songs together in the morning as part of morning announcements and the pledge of allegiance, led over the public address system. This is going to take some concerted effort, but might just be possible. At the Jackson Mann, if I could have been born to get there early enough in the morning, I might have been able to participate in community singing at their morning meeting, encourage the school to make a regular commitment to this practice, and even eventually led some of it, thus creating a climate in which singing is an ordinary daily activity performed by all.

An increase in singing could be also be fostered by teaching singing games that could be played during recess and then taking the next step by joining the students during recess and starting a game. If done often enough, the hope would be that children might start to take the initiative to play these singing games on their own, without the presence or facilitation of a teacher. In this endeavor it would be important to identify potential student leaders – those who can sing in tune, remember lyrics, remember the game, and who have the initiative to start the game and keep it moving by singing the right thing at the right time.

A further next step important to me that I would like to develop is this challenge of writing regularly on one topic and documenting the research and thinking I am engaged in. I think I did not fully understand how to use some of the tools offered by CCT to work on to complete the synthesis (such as initially setting up a large macro-structure, using graphic organizers and the process of peer review). Also, in part, I was so engrossed by my own work and thinking that it was difficult to step back, synthesize, and write coherently about my work. I would like to become a better writer, but I am not sure yet how I will go about that. I also would like to take a piece of my work or work that evolves from what I am doing currently and move through some synthesis steps with this work. Additionally, although I did a great deal of

research and reading which greatly influenced my thinking I am not sure that I demonstrate it in my writing and I do not make direct reference to much of it. This is also true of the “where does what I am doing fit into the larger picture” issue. Yes, I did read about people who were working on opera with children (and even interviewed someone) and read about work other people were doing that related to my experiments, but again, I generally do not make direct reference to these readings in my writings. In particular, the question of aesthetics has always interested me, and I read a great deal about it, but make (I think) almost no reference at all to the development of aesthetics among children or in the school culture. Yet it must be affecting my work in some way. It definitely affects my programming and choice of music I use for the classroom, but I do not discuss it. Yet the children have responded to the aesthetic quality in the music classroom. My most startling example of that is my third grade class in Brockton, Massachusetts, who told me politely but firmly that they would prefer to learn their song from Mozart’s Magic Flute in the original German as they did not think the English rendering of the lyrics were suitable for the melody. This was amazing as I had not discussed the challenges of singing songs in translation with them and had myself thought that the English translation was reasonable.

The step of developing a more consistent and disciplined writing practice is important to me, and is the one I would like to focus on. Included in that is polishing to a publishable level the Kodály “presentation pattern and song” curriculum for younger and older beginners I worked on last summer which is in second draft form and the primers I started last fall. Writing helps clarify what I thinking about and documents it for myself as well as others.

In sum, or in closing, I intend to persist when faced with personal, pedagogical and institutional challenges. I expect serendipity will open up opportunities to continue to be an agent of change in pursuit of a rich culture of music in public schools.

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APPENDICES

Kodály American Primers

These primers were modeled after Hungarian primers, but were created in a more American style with American folk music. These represent an attempt to create an easily rendered version of Hungarian Kodály music primers for young children. They are made with Publisher, desktop publishing software.

The goal of these primers is to subliminally enhance music literacy. Since they use language as well, the hope is that classroom teachers might be interested in working with them. I have not seen anything like them in this country.

Two sample primers from my collection are “Little Leaves Are Falling” and “Pumpkin, Pumpkin, Round and Fat.” The pumpkins and leaves follow the contour of the melody, and the thematically matching decorative lines are intended to suggest the five line staff. The near invisible graphics are to represent the silent beat (rest).

(I have some other ideas about how to develop these primers to subliminally represent rhythm and to make the subliminal aspect more and less apparent, or develop in gradual stages. I would like to develop primers for extremely young children.)

Little Blue Heron

1) “No Bee Without the Rose” compact disc

Little Blue Heron was formed at the behest of Peter Johnson of LivingFolk records. He is an impresario of folk music. When I worked on this CD, I developed my art as a singer, instrumentalist, arranger and researcher of Appalachian traditional music. Most of the repertoire

is of either the Carter Family or John Jacob Niles lineage. Much of the music my partner Adam Klein and I transcribed and researched ourselves.

2) “Little Blue Heron in Concert 2003”: Hard copy of track list and CD cover for production (in process).

This compact disc is being produced at the behest of Naomi Arenberg, formerly of WGBH folk radio, who kept asking “Hasn’t your duo produced any other material?” Now that we are producing it, we hope she will be able to play it.

3) Little Blue Heron Broad-sides

These are broadsides of Little Blue Heron’s transcriptions that Little Blue Heron still shares with interested musicians or music educators, free of charge. “John Barleycorn,” the example included, was made popular by the band, Traffic. The melody is based on a very old British tune.

Round Robin

Volume 9 Numbers 1 and 2

Newsletter of Boston Area Kodály Educators (BAKE).

This is the first and second issue of Round Robin that has been published in some time. I decided (in part at the request of members) to edit and revive the newsletter as a way of building presence for the organization. More importantly, I wanted to revive it to build a sense of community among the Kodály practitioners in the area and to educate other music educators as to what Kodály might offer them. Response has been terrific, however a great deal of work has gone into getting the newsletter off the ground again.

Rhythm Bones Society Newsletters

The newsletters from the time period during which when I was an active advocate for the Rhythm Bones Society to focus on children are available at <http://www.rhythmbones.com/RBPoverview.html>. (The PDF of the newsletters is large, but it is searchable with acrobat reader.) I wanted the society to take a more active role to pass on the tradition of bones playing to young people. This appendix is a compilation of my columns, “The Young Bones Player.” In each newsletter I tried to include a photograph of a child playing bones in each issue, solicited articles from others about their experiences teaching children bones and advocated for the Rhythm Bones Society to develop bones that would be easier for children to successfully play. A result of reviewing this work is that I have decided to revive “The Young Bones Player Column.”