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RELEASE THE CREATIVITY IN EVERY LEARNER

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ethics statement

The American Orff-Schulwerk Association strongly encourages members to be positive and discreet when discussing our organization, specific courses and/or teachers, and the Orff approach. The very nature of the Orff Schulwerk philosophy embodies a broad spectrum of expressions, exploring different paths to arrive at artistic and educational goals. Members are encouraged to recognize and remain open to varied approaches and to celebrate both our differences and our similarities.

ad inquiries

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mission statement

The American Orff-Schulwerk Association is a professional organization of educators dedicated to the creative music and movement approach developed by Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman.

Our Mission is:

- to demonstrate the value of Orff Schulwerk and promote its widespread use;
- to support the professional development of our members; and,
- to inspire and advocate for the creative potential of all learners.

Purposeful Movement in the Band Camp Setting

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ABSTRACT

At the Blast of Brass Summer Conference, middle and high school students participate every day in hour-long creative movement activities uniquely chosen to develop the 21st century skills of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. In this article the author describes how these purposeful movement activities can improve overall musicianship, strengthen ensemble skills, and foster social development in a band camp setting, and contends the study opens the door for further research to explore how creative movement can be used as a teaching technique in a middle or high school band rehearsal.

By Darla Meek

Silence ... stillness ... energy ... focus Students pause in anticipation until the first strains of music are heard. Bodies spring to life—jumping, twisting, bounding, soaring, collapsing. One might imagine a second-grade Orff Schulwerk music classroom. Rather, it is the 20th anniversary of the Blast of Brass Summer Conference, a week-long chamber music camp for serious middle and high school-age brass musicians hosted by Texas A&M University-Commerce in Commerce, Texas.

For five days, the students participate in large mixed ensembles, homogenous choirs, and small mixed ensembles. They also form “choice ensembles” in which they select their members, music, and rehearse themselves with limited coaching from staff. The main attraction is the featured artist. Each year, one internationally known artist conducts masterclasses, plays a recital, and is spotlighted on the Friday evening professional concert with the Blast of Brass Ensemble.

One hallmark that sets this camp apart from others of its kind is that all students participate in creative movement classes. The students are auditioned on the first day of camp and divided according to ability level into three groups—

beginners, intermediate, and advanced. Each group participates in a daily hour-long movement class. The movement activities are uniquely chosen to develop the 21st Century Skills vital to a chamber music setting: Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity.

It stands to reason that the more chamber music experience musicians in an orchestra or band have, the better the larger ensemble will perform. When musicians are involved in a chamber ensemble they are more exposed, and, therefore, more easily noticed. This forces each member to build skills such as creativity, listening, and leadership because any challenges with tuning, rhythm, style of articulation, phrasing, dynamic contrast, breathing patterns, and balance between musical lines are more easily noticed.

Purposeful movement activities strengthen these skills in an accelerated fashion as the body becomes a link between the ear and the mind. As movement instructor Phyllis Weikart (2006) stated, movement assists in “awareness and abilities that are part of the total education of the student—responding to aural, visual, and tactile information; attending and concentrating; basic timing and beat coordination; creativity and problem solving; language abilities; planning and decision making” (p. 6). Purposeful

movement not only improves overall musicianship, it plays an essential role in helping musicians enhance ensemble skills in instrumental and choral settings.

Initial Attitudes

Blast of Brass provides the majority of students their first experience with creative movement. Previously, the only movement they encountered in music settings involved fingers pressing valves or feet tapping the beat; research shows a direct causal relationship, however, between movement activities and academic achievement. Ella Shoval (2011), a researcher from the Orde Wingate Institute for Physical Education and Sports in Tel Aviv, informs us that learning is enhanced greatly when teachers use movement activities.

Movement is an exterior stimulus, and as long as the learner is engaged in his or her learning task the movement indicates that the learner’s attention is directed toward what is being learned. When attention is purely mental (interior) the activity becomes very difficult to sustain, because the nerve and muscle systems are inactive (p. 462).

One obstacle to this creative thinking was the idea of perfectionism. Most of the students enjoy the prestige of playing at a high level at their

Table 1. Positive Social Factors.

Openness to cultural stimuli	Model an attitude of excitement to learn more about new experiences. This will establish a “creativogenic” atmosphere.
Stress on becoming, not just on being	Give students time to push through a difficult problem so they can experience the joy that comes from solving it.
Free access to cultural media for everyone, without discrimination	Take definitive measures to avoid stereotypes. Choose males to play traditional female roles, and vice versa. Give students opportunities to “play” their opposite personality types when pantomiming.
Freedom to take risks	Show by example that “mistakes” are only learning opportunities. Convey to students that you will be delighted with any attempt, imperfect as it may be.
Exposure to different and even contrasting cultural stimuli	Use several student models and videos showing a variety of ideas.
Interest in diverging views	Thank everyone who offers an idea, using the same expression and tone of voice so no judgment of any kind is conveyed.
Interaction with others	Give the groups time to work together, inserting advice only when needed.
Promotion of incentives and awards	Allow students to honor each other. Receiving compliments from their peers is very motivating for young people.

SOURCE: ADAPTED BY DARLA MEEK.

respective schools. On the first day, many were initially unwilling to take a risk because they feared ridicule; therefore, the first step was to establish an atmosphere of congeniality (see Figure 1). For this reason, throughout the week I sought to adapt Dr. Silvano Arieti's (1976) socio-cultural factors to encourage creativity in any given society (see Table 1, p. 39).

Students were reminded that any idea brought forth had to be tried, no matter how improbable it seemed. As we progressed, many were surprised that most ideas offered actually worked. Additionally, giving participants a choice of sentence stems to use helped them in this process:

- I noticed...
- I value...
- I wonder...
- What would happen if...

Day One: Basic Eurhythmics

The goals for the first day included exploring basic rhythms through movement, engaging attention and improving concentration, gaining mastery of physical movements, and training the mind to split focus. We began with a warm-up to Pachelbel's *Canon*, with stretches and breathing exercises to ready students' minds and bodies for the task at hand. After introducing them to Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, movement games encouraged a spirit of playfulness and imagination. The students demonstrated note values "twice as short" and "twice as long,"

Figure 1. Warming up With Basic Eurhythmics Exercises.



PHOTOGRAPHER: CHERI MOODY. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Figure 2. Concentrating on David Frego's Ratio Game.



PHOTOGRAPHER: CHERI MOODY. USED WITH PERMISSION.

explored ratios, performed movement canons, and executed different patterns with their upper and lower bodies simultaneously (see Figure 2). These basic Eurhythmics activities helped me assess their musicianship, movement skills, and ability to follow directions. As the novelty and self-consciousness wore off, they were able to settle into the idea of "the body [being] used as a musical instrument for interpreting the sounds" (Willour, 1969, p.73).

Day Two: Creating Complementary Ostinati

For the second class session, we began with the rousing Swedish dance, "Fjäskern," to introduce the concept of reacting to tempo changes as a group and keeping a relaxed posture as tempo increases. After scaffolding the process with preliminary focus activities and viewing one scene from the *Stomp Out Loud* video (Cresswell & McNicholas, 1997) for inspiration, I posed a question to the students: How would your group speed up or slow down without a conductor? This is what a chamber group does—communicates nonverbally with each other to perform a piece. The students' task was to:

1. Choose a PLACE (i.e., school, bus stop, playground).
2. Individually, choose a task that would be performed in that setting.
3. Create an individual rhythmic ostinato using the sounds and movements that would occur when performing the task.
4. Layer the ostinati in one at a time.
5. Decide how to begin and end the scene.
6. Include a tempo change and move together as a unit through the change.

Figure 3. Students Explore the Laban Efforts as They Listen to Masterworks.



PHOTOGRAPHER: CHERI MOODY. USED WITH PERMISSION.

After each group shared, the other groups guessed the settings they were attempting to portray and provided specific comments using the previously explored sentence stems. This activity helped the students establish their place in a group effort and improve communication with others.

Day Three: Laban's Efforts

On day three, the students were introduced to Rudolf Laban, Hungarian dance master, theorist, choreographer, and teacher. Laban was known for developing a method and language to analyze movement, comprised of four factors called Movement Elements—*space*, *flow*, *weight*, and *time*. The students explored the interrelationships between these elements by performing “everyday movements” (see Table 2, p. 42) in self-space as they listened to recordings (see Figure 3).

Practicing these movements helped students expand their repertoire of gestures far more

Figure 4. Students Apply the Laban Efforts to Conducting.



PHOTOGRAPHER: CHERI MOODY. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Table 2. Laban's Eight Basic Efforts.

Action Verbs	Qualities	Movement Examples
FLOAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ indirect (S) ■ light (W) ■ sustained (T) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ treading water ■ using a bubble wand ■ staggering ■ swinging on a rope swing ■ lying on a waterbed
WRING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ indirect (S) ■ heavy (W) ■ sustained (T) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ wringing a beach towel ■ twisting off a bottle cap ■ turning over dirt with a trowel ■ squeezing juice from an orange ■ using a melon baller ■ experiencing a stomachache
PRESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ direct (S) ■ heavy (W) ■ sustained (T) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ pushing a shopping cart ■ ironing a shirt ■ closing an overloaded suitcase ■ using a paper cutter ■ kneading dough for bread ■ lifting weights
GLIDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ direct (S) ■ light (W) ■ sustained (T) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ smoothing wrinkles in a cloth ■ ice skating ■ wiping up a spill ■ throwing a paper airplane ■ playing a glissando on a piano ■ painting a wall with a roller
DAB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ direct (S) ■ light (W) ■ quick (T) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ frosting a cake ■ tip-toeing ■ typing ■ knocking ash off a cigarette ■ applying face powder
FLICK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ indirect (S) ■ light (W) ■ quick (T) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ removing an insect off the table ■ touching a hot stove ■ dusting lint from clothes ■ throwing a Frisbee ■ throwing bird seed at a wedding
SLASH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ indirect (S) ■ heavy (W) ■ quick (T) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ swinging a baseball bat ■ fencing ■ casting a fishing line ■ slamming a door ■ tearing a piece of paper
PUNCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ direct (S) ■ heavy (W) ■ quick (T) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ boxing ■ hammering a nail ■ applauding loudly ■ digging a hole ■ striking a stapler on a hard wall

SOURCE: ADAPTED BY DARLA MEEK FROM COMPILATION BY JAMES JORDAN (1996).

Figure 5. Rhythm of the Theme.



SOURCE: CREATED BY DARLA MEEK.

powerfully than simply copying physical movements because an image, activity, or emotion was innately tied to each gesture. A musician must be able to slash emotionally in order to be effective slashing physically. A body responsive to inner thoughts, attitudes, and emotions is invaluable to a musician.

The students viewed a video of a conductor, Erin Howard, using Laban's elements (Howard, 2016). This was a powerful motivator because the benefit of using the efforts while conducting was clear. Then they formed trios to listen to several pieces, such as *Air on the G String* by Bach or *Dance of the Knights* by Tchaikovsky, and decided on the most appropriate Laban effort for each piece they conducted (see Figure 4, p. 41).

Students then transferred the concept to a piece they knew, after which they read the rhythm shown in Figure 5 and used it to explore the efforts: Dab the rhythm, float the rhythm, punch the rhythm, and so on.

I drew a circle on the board and labeled it theme. I continued to draw circles and embellish them: larger, smaller, decorated, and so on. Students came to the board and drew their own unique circles. Those in the large group created variations of circles with their bodies, for example, standing, sitting, with various body parts, and with partners.

We identified the embellished circles as variations on the theme.

“Let’s transfer this concept to a piece of music. How would a composer change a melodic theme to create a variation?” The students were bubbling with ideas: “Make it shorter!” “Make it longer!” “Higher!” “Lower!” “Use different instruments!” “Change the tonality!”

As the group realized the rhythm was from *Lincolnshire Posy* by Percy Grainger, they sat up straight—almost all band students know this work. While listening to the piece, they worked in pairs to determine the most appropriate effort for each variation.

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Day Four: Transferring Knowledge to Performance Pieces

The objective for the final day was to find emotional involvement with music through creating choreography with others. It was time for the group to use the movement terms and techniques they had learned to explore their ensemble music in a new way. They were led through three creative movement activities, each using a piece of music from their upcoming Saturday concert (see Figure 6). Dalcroze practitioners refer to this as *plastique animée*, an artistic embodiment or visual representation of the

Figure 6. Students Share Their Small Group Choreography.



PHOTOGRAPHER: CHERI MOODY. USED WITH PERMISSION.

music through movement. The students danced to Granger's *Irish Tune from County Derry*, used balloons and elastic bands to show contrast in Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, and dramatized a movement story with Nelhybel's *Allegretto*. Released from reading notation on a piece of paper, they were able to communicate the music in a powerful way.

Self-Assessment and Reflection

Over the four days, even the most inhibited students were gradually able to relax and realize they were in an atmosphere of cooperation rather than competition. This experience of work through play was a sheer delight. The expressions on their faces mirrored an awakening in their bodies of something long suppressed. This metamorphosis was revealed each day when students were asked to assess themselves on the goals presented at the beginning of class. For example:

- Ability to show nuance
- Ability to stay focused
- Ability to work with others
- Willingness to take on a leadership role

They were also given anchor questions to discuss, such as:

- How can you transfer your new knowledge to your performance on Saturday?
- What does this experience make you wonder about?
- How might this experience change how you practice?

On the final day, the students were given a paper with several questions designed to help them process their musical, emotional, and social growth. This reflection exercise, a vital part of the learning experience, is defined by Giada Di Stefano (Di Stefano, Gino, Pisano, & Staats, 2016) as "the intentional attempt to synthesize, abstract, and articulate the key lessons taught by experience" (p. 5). Pondering the meaning of the activities and how they connect to other areas is where the most profound learning occurs.

The questions prompted them to describe how they felt when they were moving, working in groups, and taking on leadership roles. They were also asked to think about how they could transfer these ideas to chamber playing. The students were honest and transparent in their reflections. At the very least,

the experience was enlightening; for many, it was actually therapeutic (see Figure 7). Here are some of the most illuminating comments from this process:

- "I felt surprisingly very connected, not only to the music but with the other students."
- "All of the activities we did allowed us to be more confident about ourselves and our playing. It's interesting how music and movement connect."
- "While I usually loathe physical activity and dance, I had a blast during the activities. I can't think of a time during class that I was not smiling or laughing."
- "I either sit in the corner or stay at home. Since I was unable to do either, I was forced to participate. I was able to make new friendships. I wish this class lasted longer."
- "It was cool because usually I play an instrument, but in Eurhythmics I was the instrument."

Figure 7. Students Develop Relationships Through Movement.



PHOTOGRAPHER: CHERI MOODY. USED WITH PERMISSION.

- “I felt like my body was connected to the music, like the music and I were one. It was a great feeling, better than making the All-State Band or finally hitting that really high note.”
- “I was taught how to lead.”
- “I don’t think there was a leader but more everyone equally working together.”
- “I’m usually a follower, but I often found myself being a group leader.”
- “Being a musician is like a team sport and there is never just one player, so you had to connect with others.”
- “I was connecting well with people I have never even seen.”
- “I believe it helped my ensemble, especially my fellow trumpets, work better together as we now know we think alike.”
- “Eurhythmics and chamber music work closely with one another because you have to communicate with the whole group.”
- “This was such a fun and unique class that I will for sure tell my band about.”
- “I have to recognize the feeling behind the music and perform it more freely.”

- “I feel alive. I wish we had this at my school. I will play more musically now.”
- “This class should be taught everywhere. I loved every moment.”

Conclusion

Movement became the vehicle for the students to express themselves and communicate with others. It cultivated a human ensemble, turning strangers into friends. As a result, they experienced a freedom of expression on a deep level that affected their feelings about themselves.

Everyone has a need to create, explore possibilities, think divergently, and take risks. It is important for music educators to give students opportunities to do so at the secondary level as they develop socially, emotionally, and artistically. Carl Orff challenged us to take the Schulwerk to new horizons. Purposeful movement, an essential part of the Schulwerk, could transform learning in band halls throughout the United States in exciting ways! ■

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