MUSIC AND ME

An Introduction to Music

Senior Honors Project

by

Judith Lee Goodrick

Spring, 1981

Dr. Arnold Burkart, advisor
From March 11 to May 21 I did my student teaching at LaSalle elementary school in Mishawaka, Indiana, under Mrs. Erma Gassensmith. Although my prime objective was teaching math to the fifth and sixth graders, I did have 45 minutes a day to work with my homeroom of 25 fifth graders on spelling, music and art.

Due to a lack of funds, there is no music and/or art teacher at LaSalle. The elementary orchestra director comes once or twice a week to practice with the few students who are interested. For the rest of the students, music training is the homeroom teacher's responsibility. Unfortunately it is a responsibility sorely neglected. There seems to be no problem with teaching an art lesson, but music has been virtually ignored for many of the students. Because of my music endorsement, I was glad for the opportunity to "enlighten" these children.

In addition to the varied musical background of my class, I had to consider my time allotment. While 45 minutes a day sounds quite adequate, there had to be time set aside for spelling, in the form of lesson introduction, pretest and final test. Another problem was the varying arrival and departure times of the students. The special reading students reach homeroom late, the learning disabled students and patrols leave early. Trying to teach anything in that last 45 minutes takes a great deal of effort. I knew I had to generate interest. I realized that trying to cover even the rudiments of music such as pulse, rhythm, etc. would be difficult.

Fortunately, Mrs. Gassensmith, my supervising teacher, is working on a government grant involving photography. Instamatic
cameras and film, as well as the developing are provided.

Mrs. Gassensmith agreed to let me use the cameras in conjunction with a music unit. I decided the most general and interesting approach would be through music appreciation and interpretation. I tried to choose descriptive music, and most of it out of the ordinary.

I started with listening only. I chose compositions with descriptive titles:

- The Flight of the Bumble Bee (Rimsky-Korsakov)
- Funeral from Doctor Zhivago (Maurice Jarre)
- In the Hall of the Mountain King (Grieg)
- Minute Waltz (Op. 64, No. 1) (Chopin)
- Night on Bald Mountain (Mussorgsky)

I first played the piece, then asked the students what the song made them think of. Oftentimes their responses were quite similar to the actual title of the song. When everyone had been given a chance to contribute, I revealed the actual title of the song and we discussed its appropriateness.

My next step was to introduce songs with descriptive titles which might not seem applicable. I used Maynard Ferguson's recording of Chameleon and an interpretation of Scott Joplin's Pineapple Rag performed by violinist Itzhak Perlman. With these pieces I introduced the titles first. My intent was to show the class that many times a song means one thing to one person and something completely different to someone else.

Having given the class a little practice in interpreting music, I began the basic premise of my project. Each time we had music, I would play three pieces and elicit responses as before. I explained that whenever possible I would allow them to take one
of the cameras to photograph what the music had brought to mind. Our goal was a booklet compilation of these photos entitled "Music and Me".

I began with the Switched on Bach version of J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major, 2nd movement, and got two very different responses. The original concerto was the traditional three movement concerto, with the first and last movements allegro and the second movement more adagio. The synthesizer performs this movement in Bach's original ornamented style, and although it is slower than the other two movements, this is not to say that it is any less complex. One response was that the song reminds one of the wind in the trees. But not a gentle breeze, rather one filled with the chill of death and even the funeral ceremony itself. Another response compared the recorded sounds to the sounds and motion of a pinball machine. This seems to show an awareness of the contrapuntal devices and the complexity of sounds it created.

I used synthesizer recordings of several of Bach's two part inventions as well. The second listening experience in this set was the Two Part Invention in A minor. The inventions are all quite similar, but the responses were once again diverse. In the case of the A minor invention, and the others, key appears to be a significant factor. One girl was reminded of the music in a Chinese restaurant. For others, the contrapuntal style and tempo were the inspiration. One boy felt the equality and complexity of sounds as those of a space battle with lasers. Yet another boy envisioned a runner being chased and then caught as the invention
slowed down. The invention is complex, and the responses show an underlying awareness of it.

The final piece in this set was Enigmatic Ocean, Part I by jazz violinist Jean Luc-Ponty. The composition is in four parts. Part I is an introduction, and does not showcase any one instrument, but combines electric violin, guitar, rhythm guitar, bass and keyboards and percussion. The student responses parallel the movement of the composition almost exactly. One boy envisioned a racecar due to the motion and gradual "take off" of the song. Another saw it as a competitive race. The song itself begins with a very subdued hum and electric glissandos, with some chordal progressions. The next entrance includes percussion and several of the electric string instruments in arpeggios which proceed chromatically. The final stage keeps a distinct beat, but with violin and guitar, then keyboard taking over and continuing the chromatic progression. The whole movement peaks with a roll, then fades. Both a racecar and a competitive footrace accurately portray this mounting chromatic tension with its subsequent and final release.

To begin the second set of listening exercises I returned to Bach's two part inventions, this time one in F major. Once again it is a study in counterpoint. It provided one of the most thought provoking responses and the most easily taken photograph. A boy said it made him think of making designs on the ceiling. The ceiling is like most school ceilings in that it is made up of tiles with many dots on them. The dots alone seem an excellent portrayal of counterpoint, and the idea of the infinite number of
designs the mind can produce is also in keeping with the complexity of the invention. The mature concepts portrayed in this response are admirable for a fifth grader.

I used yet another two part invention, that in A major. Throughout this invention the middle voice remains steady. Towards the close there is an especially effective exchange of motive between voices. The steady beat accounts for the feelings of one child that it was like a long row of dominoes knocking each other down. The composition as well as the contrapuntal style does lend itself to the chain reaction analogy. In a similar vein, but quite a different mode of expression, another student was reminded of rain dripping off a tree and splashing. In this instance it is perhaps the electronic treatment of the invention which conjured the idea of fluidity, both in sound and image.

The concluding composition in this set was Irlandaise from Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano, composed and performed by pianist Claude Bolling with Jean-Pierre Rampal on flute. Irlandaise is a slow, jazzy waltz. It begins with string bass and piano setting the stage for a smooth, easy flute melody. Gradually piano and flute become partners with piano arpeggios and a soaring flute part. Midway the piano solos in an improvisational interlude reminiscent of piano bars. Once again the flute enters as a calming influence, but soon joins piano in becoming increasingly jazzy and rhythmically intense. Once this unity of style is achieved, the movement draws to a slower, calmer close.

Both reactions to this selection point to the awareness
of this calm, soothing jazz style. Both students thought of nature. To a boy it was flowers blooming. He equated flowers with beauty, and this song embodied beauty. For a girl it was trees waving. She was sensitive to the triadic form of the selection (slow, fast, slow) and first pictured trees gently swaying, then moving faster as the wind increased, and finally slowing again. I was impressed that both children envisioned aspects of nature in relation to a slower, calmer selection.

The final set was made up of only two selections due to the length of the second. The first was Chuck Mangione's Theme from "Side Street". Mangione plays flugelhorn and his band is made up of saxophone (or flute), bass and electric guitars, and drums. The selection is in ABA form, beginning with a subdued attack by the rhythm section as an introduction to flugelhorn treatment of a smooth, lyrical melody. As all the instruments join in there is a strong Latin feel created by a driving, syncopated bass and percussion line. The flugelhorn, too, shows a little more virtuosity and concludes with several octave leaps as the guitar and percussion take over. The original melody is given new dimension by doubling of a third. This, as well as the change in instrumentation, gives the impression of speed which was felt by the students. To conclude the song, flugelhorn re-enters with the original fluidity, then fades.

One reaction to this resulted in a series of photos. A girl said it sounded like someone "getting started" in the morning. She specifically cited tempo and dynamics as contributing factors to her choice of subject. It seems these are indeed the most
easily discernable elements of music among children. The other response was mainly based on the tempo changes as represented by tennis players. The action of tennis is an apt correlation for the jazzy/Latin format of the selection.

The crowning glory of our listening activities was a personal favorite of mine, the "allegro con fuoco" movement of Dvorak's *New World Symphony*. It was on this number that the students surprised and pleased me most with their attentiveness. The movement is much longer than any other they had experienced, yet they were all still. Perhaps they were as awed by the overwhelming sense of power with the terrific feeling of unreleased energy as I. Even in quiet, pastoral sections there is an undercurrent of tension which never seems to climax, but instead continually builds.

Both student responses reflect this tension as shown by competitive sports. One boy was reminded of the drama of a baseball game. He envisioned every aspect -- the pitch, the hit, the catch. Even his original vocal response was full of the excitement a game holds. The other response involved the frenzy of a bicycle race. The student even got so involved as to suggest specific incidents such as riding under a bridge and falling off the bicycle. Both students seemed to have been swept up by the spirit of Dvorak's work, and have captured it in dramatic ways.

In retrospect, it appears that some elements of music are quite easily discerned by elementary students, namely tempo, rhythm and dynamics, and to a lesser extent, key. These proved to be the strongest influences in forming the images the students tried to photograph. And although only three students from the class are
noticeably involved in music, several others displayed some knowledge of musical terms, especially "beat" and "tone". For a group such as mine, this seemed to be a good starting place in music. The experience was a joy for the students. There were the usual few students who wanted nothing to do with it, but for the rest of the class, music was something to look forward to. If there wasn't time for music, they were quite disappointed. Everyone had a chance to contribute, and could feel confident that no matter what their response was to a song, it was right. It is unfortunate that the school does not have a regular music instructor. I regret the fact that this musical exercise could have been a good beginning for a more extensive music program if I had only had more time. It was successful in another area, that of fostering more creative, interpretive thought, and this is a skill which is reinforced daily. The class had fun with music, and no one was pressured to contribute unless ready. It was a good experience for us all.
MUSIC
AND NE
The song reminded me of a pinball machine.
The beat makes it sound like a pinball machine.
It sounded like wind blowing through the trees and like somebody died and they were having a ceremony.
Two Part Invention in a minor – J.S. Bach

The movie made me think of a Chinese restaurant. I had been there once before, but it was
in the restaurant itself that was the most striking.

Kris Corwin
This song was fast and it made me think of a runner being chased, and when it slowed down he was caught.
The reason it made me think of a space war is when lasers are firing it sounds like it.
Race cars

The reason I think of a race car is when a race car takes off it makes me think of this song. Also you get the feeling of the race car in motion.
The music made me think of 2 people running because of the fast movement in the song.
Two Part Invention in F major—J.S. B.

This song made me think of designs on the ceiling. If you look at it you can see all sorts of designs on this ceiling. If you look real hard you can see designs too.

Steve Mikes
This song made me think of dominos. You can hear the sound like each one makes the next one happen, just like dominos knock each other down.

Jeramey White
This song made me think of a tree being rained on. The tones are raindrops rolling off and that’s the raindrops hitting the water – a splash!
Irlandaise from Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano

When I see flowers blooming I always think of this song. All flowers are beautiful and sweet smelling. It looks nice when I see a flower blooming. Flowers are lovely.

Gary Heighway
Trees Waving
This song sounds like the wind blowing gently and trees are going back and forth with the wind. Then the wind goes faster and they go back and forth fast. Then they slow down.
Playing Tennis

It makes me think of somebody walking to the tennis court. Then starts hitting balls and running after them. Then sits down to rest. Then starts playing again. Then walks home.

Angel Rainey
The music made me think of someone in a hurry. Was the beat of the music and the tone. It was a fast song.
Starting your day off!

The song made me think of someone starting off the day, mainly me. It starts out slow and gets faster and louder.
Allegro con fuoco from the New World Symphony
-Dvorak

It makes me feel like the beat is like a bike race. It sounds like they are under a bridge and one of them falls off of his bike.

Carrie Esarey
This makes me think of baseball.
It sounds like one guy hitting the ball and the other guy is catching it. He's...