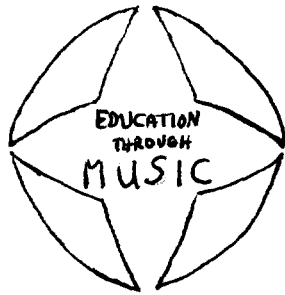


ETM:  
EDUCATION THROUGH MUSIC



Soli Deo Gloria

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Honors Thesis  
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Education Through Music is based upon the ideas and beliefs of Mary Helen Richards. She has a full time staff working with her as she travels around the country giving workshops and updating her teaching techniques.

She has been influenced by the teachings of Zoltan Kodaly. She explains his influence: "It was the story of his search for songs in his own tongue that the children could hear and relate to easily, that led me to a strong awareness of the need for songs in our own rhythms and in our own melodies...I developed a great feeling of concern and responsibility for our music teachers, that they be given the type of training that will equip them to deal with their teaching situations, that they learn to look at children to see what particular type of song experience the child needs, and that each teacher develop an understanding of the child and how to work with them."<sup>1</sup> Her philosophy is to teach children--not music. I should state at the beginning that although I like ETM, I believe music should be included in a school's curriculum for its own sake. It seems to me that these two approaches are not incompatible. I say approaches because Mrs. Richards states that "...ETM is not a method. It is rather a way of being with children, a process. It is an attempt to reach the child through music."<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Richards uses many games in teaching. ETM is rather unique from other teaching methods in the amount of games it employs. Games are used to help the very young child with communication and language skills. Mrs. Richards puts

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it this way: "The attitudes, movements, inflections and eye-contact experiences that constantly accompany the flow of our language are a natural part of the experience games and help the children to learn to be aware of each other and to communicate their awareness. The experience games are built on the songs which come from the melody track of the English language."<sup>3</sup> With the young child she believes, "we communicate by body movement to the language we speak and to the language we hear. The importance of this to the child in his ability to communicate is only beginning to be understood. Singing is elevated speech and as such emphasizes the rhythm, melody and structure of the language. The experience game song focuses the child on the language he speaks, tuning him in, focusing his attention, helping him to see, hear, and feel, to anticipate and respond."<sup>4</sup>

The ETM method is centered around the concept of reaching children through music. Mrs. Richards believes that music is just the vehicle through which we can educate and reach children. ETM works to help a child in the acceptance of himself. For instance, a child's name is used when working with rhythm patterns (e.g. Bil-ly, Car-o-lyn). The child is very conscious of the fact that his name is being used. He is important enough for the teacher to include his name and he can begin to learn other's names. At this point it is important to note that when using this technique in a game, such as "Hickety, Tickety"<sup>5</sup>, the teacher should be careful to include everyone eventually.

### Basic Ideas About ETM

As stated before, the main idea behind this method is to teach children, not to teach music to children. Another concept is to create an atmosphere wherein the children can be creative. The teacher should have a basic lesson plan, but it should be flexible enough to adapt to whatever the children come up with.

It is too easy to do a lot of talking with this method instead of doing. Often, too much time is spent explaining the game and what the class is going to attempt to do. The teacher should be aware of the capabilities of her children and adapt each lesson so the class experiences as much as possible with as little explanation as possible.

There are basically four different parts to each singing game and each part has a specific purpose. The four parts are: movement, music, social interaction and language. I will go into detail in each of these areas later. In almost all of the singing games each of these parts is represented. One reason the singing games do work well with children is because the children are enjoying the game while the learning is going on. They are involved with the learning and physically involved with the music. They are also learning that it is fun to work with other children.

### Concept Materials

There are several "concept materials" used in ETM. One

of the basic ingredients is folk songs. Mrs. Richards has collected these folk songs from around the world. Many she learned as a child and quite a few have been sent to her by other teachers. They are as varied as "Bombalalom"<sup>6</sup> from Brazil to "Yonder She Comes"<sup>7</sup> from Missouri. Solfegge symbols are used in ETM, but the main emphasis is still the singing game.

Rhythm symbols are used almost exclusively for elementary children. When the students are older they are taught the common names of these symbols (e.g. quarter notes, eighth notes, etc.). Echo clapping and working with writing and singing the names of rhythm symbols are commonly used techniques. On the following page I have illustrated some examples of rhythm symbols and names. There are many different ways to use rhythm symbols and once the child understands the basic ideas (e.g. ta= quarter note) it is not difficult to transfer him to the common names. I think it is important to expose him to the common names at the earliest time the teacher feels it is appropriate.

Another widely used ETM "material" is the form map. A form map incorporates a child's feelings into the written expression of the song, it helps him relate symbol to sound. This is a very good opportunity for the child to be creative because the map is not dictated to him. A good way to use the form map with elementary children is to first make a map in the air. The child uses his pointer finger in the air

as a pencil. When the music starts, he can move his finger in a smooth motion wherever he wants to take it. It is then time to put the map on paper. This is done with a marker and a large enough piece of paper to be creative (on). The child puts an "X" somewhere on the paper for a starting point and draws from there. The first time this is done, the cap should be left on the marker so the child makes a practice map that can be changed. An example of a form map is on the following page. It is my form map to the song "Sally Gooden."<sup>8</sup>

The last material I will discuss is the beat map. A beat map is no more than a picture of the beats. Phrasing can be incorporated into this. On the following page is a beat map to the song "Blue Bird."<sup>9</sup> Whenever a pulse or beat is felt, the child makes a line to indicate this. If the pulse is divided he makes two smaller lines. The purpose of the beat map is to help the child understand phrasing as well as the beats and how and where they are divided.

#### Teaching Through Experience Games

The four areas of an experience game-- movement, music, social interaction and language-- will now be discussed. There are many games that could be used as examples for each area. I will choose one game and how the aspect I am exploring is brought out.

The first area is movement. I have chosen the game "Puccinella"<sup>10</sup> to illustrate this concept. A child is chosen

Handwritten cursive practice strokes, showing a series of connected loops and a final downward stroke.

Handwritten cursive practice strokes, featuring a large loop followed by a series of smaller loops and a final downward stroke.

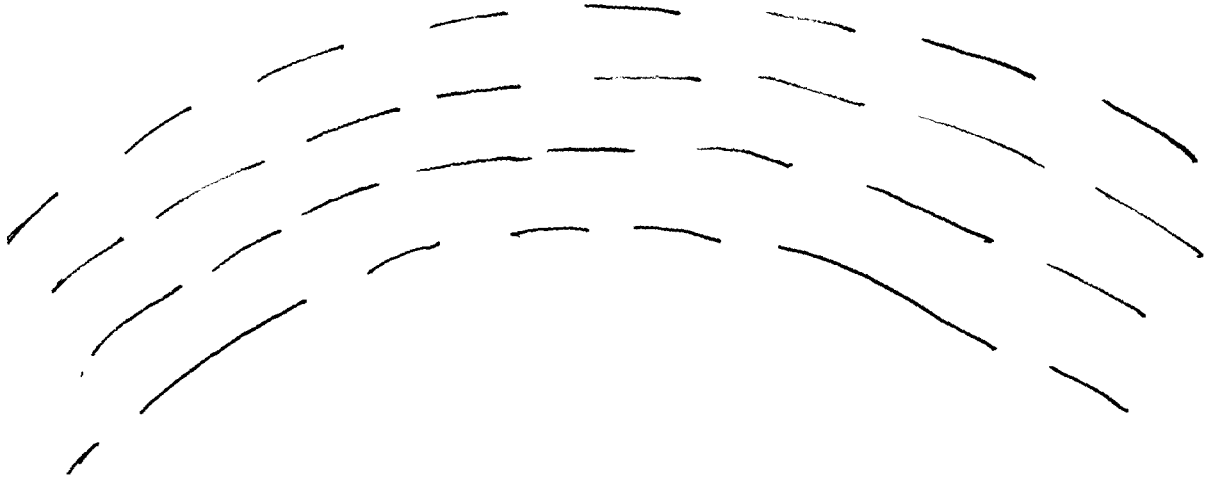
Handwritten cursive practice strokes, showing a series of connected loops and a final downward stroke.

Handwritten cursive practice strokes, featuring a series of connected loops and a final downward stroke.

Form Map  
to  
"Sally Gooden"

Handwritten cursive practice strokes, showing a series of connected loops and a final downward stroke.

Beat Map  
to  
"Blue Bird"





to stand in the middle of a circle of children. The children in the circle join hands and circle around singing, "Look who's here! Puncinella, Puncinella! Look who's here! Puncinella from the zoo!" At this point the circle stops and the children drop hands. They put on imaginary glasses and sing "What can you do, etc.." During this verse the child in the middle does some body actions. The circle children then imitate the actions exactly while singing "We can do it too, etc.." Next, the child in the middle closes his eyes, extends his hand and turns in a circle while the children clap their hands and sing "Who do you choose, etc.." On the last word of the song the child stops and follows his hand to the new Puncinella.

This game has the children moving, stopping to do actions, and imitating another's movements. The child in the middle learns to stop at the cadence. It also develops eye-motor-coordination.

The second idea to explore is music. The song in this area I will explain is "Circle Left."

This game is played by having the children form a circle. They hold hands and circle left on the first verse. On the final cadence, "Shake them 'simmons down!" they stop in place and shake their hands and squat down with the music. Every child can have a chance to make up a verse to the song. The final cadence goes down mi-mi-re-do, as the children move their bodies and hands down. The hand signals could be used here to bring out the downward motion of the music.

The third area is social interaction. I have seen the "Penny Song"<sup>12</sup> work well in this area.

The children are seated in a circle with their hands in front of them. They pass around a penny during the song while one child who is "it" hides his eyes in a corner. Passing a penny carefully from one child to the next is not an easy task to accomplish. On the last note of the song the penny stops and the children sing that they are ready. The child comes in from the corner and has three guesses as to who has the penny. The questions and responses need to be in clear, loud voices. There are variations in this game to make it adaptable for all grade levels. Once the children learn this game it seems to work well with the teacher observing instead of participating. This gives the class a chance to interact very closely with one another. Every class and age group that I have seen playing this game seem to like it and pay close attention so they don't lose track of where the penny is. The questions and answers are sung and responses are needed after each one from the entire class.

The final aspect I will explore is the use of language in ETM. Mrs. Richards believes that singing is merely elevated speech. In her book, The Music Language, (page 10), she explains about her songs, "The child can sing these songs easily and in tune because they are situated on the melody track of his speech. With these songs he is comfortable and happy and secure in the knowledge and certainty that he has a

gift of song with which he can communicate with those around him." Communication is very important in ETM. Many of the songs use questions and answers (e.g. "Penny Game"), questions that require responses (e.g. "Pumpkinella"), and dances or games which need cooperation (e.g. "Sally Gooden").

#### My Experiences With ETM

I student - taught at Eastwood and Wilbur Wright elementary schools in New Castle, Indiana in the spring quarter of 1980.

My supervising teacher was Mrs. Linda Kinnett. She has been teaching elementary music for eight years. After attending several ETM seminars she adopted the approach and has been using it for six years. When I came in, all the children at both schools were used to ETM and understood it fairly well. I participated in this approach and taught it. Mrs. Kinnett believes this approach has been successful and I agree with her. She uses ETM; however, she does not go into it as deeply as one could and she also uses some "traditional" music teaching methods. That is, she uses music books, plays other games, and utilizes dancing. I believe using more than one approach gives the children a wider variety of learning. The prominent idea from some supervisors, teachers, and principals seems to be just let the kids have fun in music.. That is fine, and I agree that music should be enjoyable, but we are not here merely to entertain them.. Music is a valuable subject containing worthwhile things to be learned. If this is forgotten, music becomes easily

dispensable. That is a terrible future for music education. Educators should do their best to see that schools without music do not become a total reality. My experiences with ETM and other approaches has reinforced in my mind the potential in music to benefit children.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Mary Helen Richards, Music Language 2, (Richards Institute of Music Education and Research, 1974), page iv.
2. Ibid, page vi.
3. Sister Fleurette Sweeney and Margaret Wharram, Experience Games Through Music, (Richards Institute of Music Education and Research, 1973), page 1.
4. Mary Helen Richards, The Music Language, (Richards Institute of Music Education and Research, 1973), page 2.
5. Ibid, page 38.
6. Ibid, page 84.
7. Ibid, page 32.
8. Music Language 2, page 94.
9. Ibid, page 53.
10. Experience Games Through Music, page 84.
11. The Music Language, page 94.
12. Ibid, page 88.

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1. Experience Games Through Music, Sister Fleurette Sweeney and Margaret Wharrar, Richards Institute of Music Education and Research, 1973.
2. The Music Language, Mary Helen Richards, Richards Institute of Music Education and Research, 1973.
3. Music Language 2, Mary Helen Richards, Richards Institute of Music Education and Research, 1974.