

FOSTERING CREATIVITY AND IMPROVISATION
IN THE ELEMENTARY GENERAL MUSIC CLASSROOM
USING THE ORFF APPROACH

A CREATIVE PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF MUSIC

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project was to explore extant literature on the subject of using the Orff approach to foster improvisation and creativity in the elementary general music classroom. I decided to pursue this topic for a few salient reasons: 1) I am an elementary general music teacher, 2) I have recently taken a more in-depth interest in the Orff approach in general, and 3) upon discovery of the four pedagogical principles of the Orff approach, i.e. exploring, imitating, improvising, and creating, I realized that improvising and creating were noticeably lacking in my own teaching and I wished to be able to incorporate them more often into my curriculum and teaching practice (Shamrock 1986). In completing this project, I gathered sources from extant literature regarding the use of the Orff approach to foster improvisation and creativity, and was able to use that information to glean ready-made strategies for doing so that have been invented by other educators who have pursued this topic, and learned what is necessary for me to invent my own strategies and activities that are tailor-made for my students.

The literature base for the Orff approach is immense. However, literature that specifically addresses improvisation, aside from defining it, is limited. There are even fewer sources that address creativity, which I define as the act of planning out larger works by using concepts and skills previously learned. Much can be found defining the Orff approach, and explaining its history, but not much specifically regarding its use for fostering improvisation and creativity in the elementary general music classroom. I was surprised to find an article by Carl Orff himself, detailing some interesting history about the Schulwerk. Many sources provided basic information, history, and some “tools for the toolbox,” which have already helped me develop and implement activities in the classroom. These activities have increased student engagement and enjoyment of music class in general.

One study that I found to be relevant to the goals of this project examined improvisation among fifth grade students (Beegle 2010). The aim of the study was to examine and describe children's interactions with one another and the resulting improvisations they created after participating in the four-part improvisational planning process. The researcher performed the study at the elementary school where they were the general music teacher, and the participants were two classes of fifth grade elementary school students. The researcher observed and described the social interactions pursuant to responding to a prompt for improvisation, and also observed and described the improvisations that resulted from those interactions. The researcher also found that four areas in particular were common to all groups regardless of what the prompt was: exploration, role assignment, run-through, and negotiation. Results indicated that students would move freely between the different components of the four-part improvisational planning process, and that some material during their exploration phases would be unrelated to the prompt. Also, children's improvisations varied depending on the prompt: poetry, music, or painting.

I used the results from the Beegle study to inform an improvisation activity that I developed for use with special education students in a mild interventions setting. I showed the students a painting of a sunny day in a garden and asked them to work together in groups of three to create a short sound piece that they thought described the painting using sound. This activity was successful with the students, as they greatly enjoyed the social interaction and using the classroom instruments in order to express their thoughts. The students spent the majority of their time in the exploration phase, but frequently switched between exploration, negotiation, and role-assignment as they experimented and changed their material.

Another relevant study examined the melodic improvisations of children ages 7 through

9, and followed the same group of students for 3 years (Brophy 2005). The students performed improvisations as part of a class rondo for Orff style instruments in ABACADA form, wherein the B, C, and D sections of the rondo were to be 8 beat pentatonic improvisations performed on an alto xylophone. Each student improvised three melodies each year, for a collected total of 558 improvisations. The researcher also administered the Intermediate Measures of Music Audiation (IMMA, Gordon 1979) assessment, and also an original assessment of their own designed to assess mallet skill, each year. The researcher was looking for the presence of repeated and developed melodic and rhythmic material as well as steady beat and antecedent/consequent phrasing. The study revealed that as students aged, their improvisations became more sophisticated and complex.

In addition to the primary sources above, the *Music Educators Journal* contained several articles that were germane to this topic. Orff (1963) and Shamrock (n.d.) indicated that music and movement were the key components of the Orff approach, and that the approach was designed to utilize both to facilitate music making. The child's own culture was the basis for the approach, and included literature, nursery rhymes, and folk songs as sources of material. Shamrock mentioned that although the Orff approach was generally seen as something for use in elementary general music classrooms, it could be used with students of all ages, and was also appropriate to use with students with special needs. Shamrock (1986) identified the four pedagogical pillars of the Orff approach as exploring, imitating, improvising, and creating. Shamrock also stated that Orff viewed learning with an emphasis on natural growth, likening it to a wildflower that grows without much cultivation. By using the four pedagogical pillars, students could have an array of experiences with music that even many professionally trained musicians do not, particularly improvising and creating. Beckstead (2013) defined improvisation

as “...the art of thinking and playing music at the same time” (p.69). Beckstead also cited some Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI, Limb and Braun 2008)) studies that found that we access different parts of our brains when we are improvising than when we perform prepared works. Those same studies also showed that there is no difference in brain activity between simple and complex improvisations.

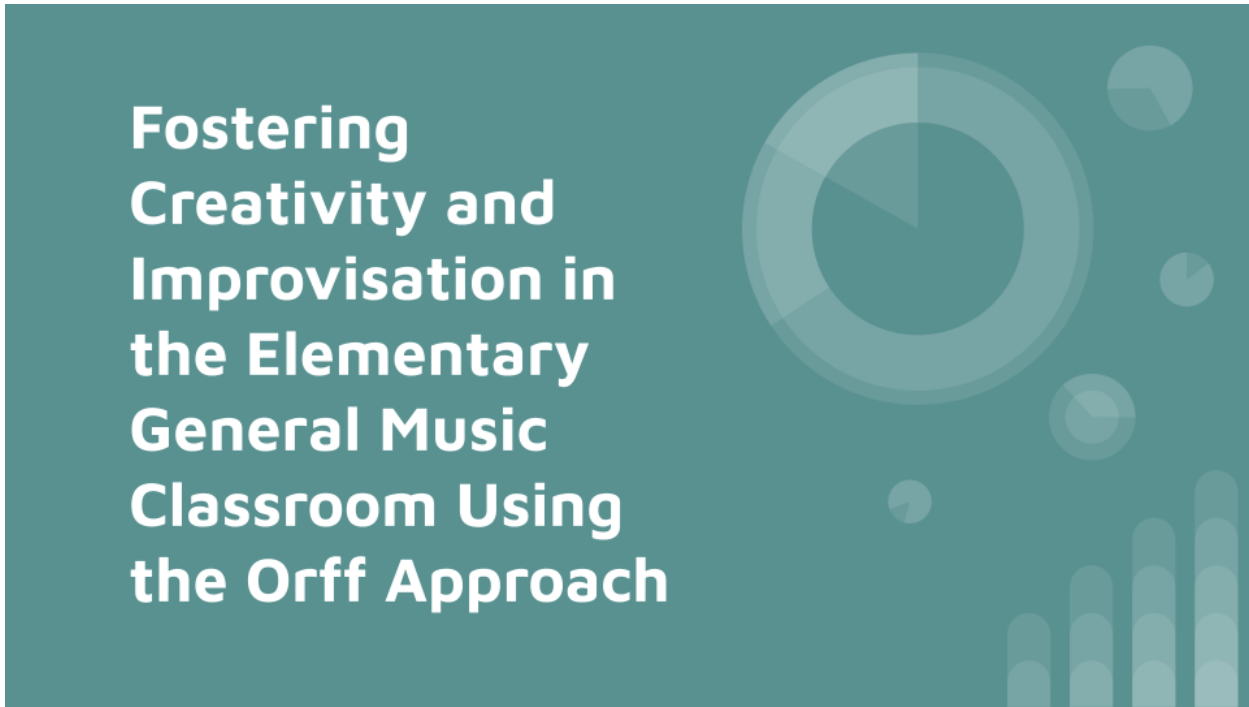
Whitcomb (2013) gave some ways to overcome fears of teaching improvisation and how to keep things simple with the students. Whitcomb suggested using what is already known, including melodic and rhythmic vocabulary that has already been taught and developed with the students, familiar repertoire, and to incorporate improvisation into existing skill building activities. Use of a “fallback” pattern was also suggested, just in case a student cannot think of an original idea when it is their turn to participate: they can simply use the “fallback” pattern instead.

Thomas (1980) gave example activities to use in the classroom to get students improvising. One such activity was called “sound and movement” and involved the students standing in a circle, responding to the movements of a leader in the center by using vocal improvisations. These improvisations did not have to be melodic, they could be sound effects. The initial stages of this activity involved the students learning some vocalized consonant sounds that they could use to respond to the movements of the leader. Visuals could be added to the prompts, and be used to record the improvisations. Thomas also suggested the use of non-traditional notation (a form of iconic notation) to represent different sounds or rhythmic figures. A game that could be played with this was called “Guess A Graphic.” In this activity, the students were shown a set of lines and dots and must guess based on peer improvisations which set was performed. A variation on this activity was called “Move A Graphic,” wherein

the students acted out the improvisation instead of using only sounds. Another activity that involved a bit more sophistication on the part of the students was called “Rotating Rondo.” In this activity, the students would sing a song (Thomas used “Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor”), and then four students improvised using an established rhythmic pattern on some Orff instruments. The four students could be chosen in a variety of ways, but Thomas suggested making them soloists for part of the song. The students improvised on the established rhythmic pattern using the pentatonic scale for sixteen beats, and then could improvise freely for sixteen additional beats. The instructor played an eight beat bridge to signal the four students in the center to return to their places in the outer circle, and four new soloists were selected. The game continued until all students had a chance to play the instruments in the center of the circle.

In addition to enhancing my own curriculum and teaching practice, I will also share the knowledge I gain from completion of this project with other educators, hoping to encourage them to use the Orff approach in their classrooms as well. The Schulwerk can be used with any musical subject, i.e. general music, or ensembles, and with any age. The presentation that I have created for this project is intended for pre-service educators, and in-service educators, for those working or planning to work in the elementary general music setting. My intent is that the information contained herein will be of value to the profession of general elementary music teaching by increasing awareness and understanding of the Orff approach. Orff himself stated that the approach was misinterpreted and misunderstood in many places, and I remain hopeful that this creative project will assist educators by providing additional ways for their students to independently use music as a medium of self-expression and creativity (Orff and Walter 1963).

POWERPOINT SLIDES



Fostering Creativity and Improvisation in the Elementary General Music Classroom Using the Orff Approach



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Purpose of this Presentation



Purpose of Presentation

Give an overview of the Orff Approach.

Provide ways to incorporate improvisation and creation in the elementary general music classroom through use of the Orff Approach.

Pursuant to requirements for the Master of Music Degree at Ball State University

What's the Problem?

What's the Problem?

Gruenhaugen and Whitcomb (2014) sent a survey to 145 elementary music teachers around the country.

58% percent of them stated they spent 0%-10% of their instructional time on improvisational activities.

26% indicated they spent 11%-20% of their instructional time on improvisational activities.

16% of them indicated they spent 21% or more of their instructional time on improvisational activities. (p. 385)



What's the Problem? (continued)

73% of them stated that improvisation was included in district-level music curricula. (Gruenhaugen and Whitcomb, p. 385)



What's the Problem? (continued)

Gruenhaugen and Whitcomb also found that **90% of educators polled had training in improvisation**, stemming from certification in **Orff, Kodaly, Dalcroze, or the Gordon Institute of Music Learning**, as well as from other sources. (p. 384)



What's the Problem? (continued)

If the Gruenhaugen and Whitcomb study is generalizable to the larger population of elementary music educators, we can reasonably conclude the following:

1. Most elementary music teachers have had some training in improvisation.
2. Most elementary music teachers are NOT including improvisation activities in their instruction.



What's the Problem? (continued)

So, what's the solution?

I predict that using the Orff approach can effectively foster improvisation and creativity in the elementary general music classroom.

Brief Overview of the Orff Approach

Carl Orff (1895-1982)

German composer and music teacher

Famous for *Carmina Burana*

Orff Schulwerk developed in the 1920s

The American Orff Schulwerk Association was founded in May of 1968 at Ball State University.





What is Orff Schulwerk?

Orff Schulwerk is an approach to teaching music in an elemental manner.

"The Latin term 'elementarius' means 'belonging to the elements,' to the origins, the beginnings, appropriate to first principles" Dr. Mary Shamrock.

Music and movement provide the primary art forms in the Orff approach. Dalcroze was an important influence. (Orff 1963, p. 69)

Its pedagogical pillars are exploration, imitation, improvisation, and creation.

Source material is from the child's own culture: literature, nursery rhymes, folk songs, etc.

Though seen as primarily beneficial for elementary age children, this can be used for students of any age.

Effective approach to use with students with special needs.



Foundational Concepts

Singing

Saying

Dancing

Playing

Based on the child's natural behavior, and all can be used to facilitate the pedagogical pillars of exploring, imitating, improvising, and creating. Orff likened this to a wild flower, as it, "...flourishes best in its natural environment, without much cultivation." (Shamrock, p. 52)

"We all know from experience that wild flowers thrive in abundance while carefully tended garden flowers disappoint us sometimes; they lack the strength of natural growth," (Orff, p. 69)



The Pedagogical Pillars Defined

Shamrock (1986) gives us definitions of the pedagogical pillars of the Orff Approach:

"...1. *Exploration*-discovery of the possibilities available in both sound and movement;

2. *Imitation*-developing basic skills in rhythmic speech and body percussion (clapping, finger-snapping, thigh slapping or *patschen*, foot stamping, and others;;

3. *Improvisation*-extending the skill with these components to the point where each individual can initiate new patterns and combinations as well as contribute to group activity based on this ability; and

4. *Creation*-combining material from any or all of the previous phases into original small forms such as rondos, theme and variations, and mini-suites; and of special significance, transforming literary material (fables, stories, poems) into miniature "theatre pieces" through whatever components seem appropriate..." (p. 54).



Consider This

"Many (teachers) become attracted to the pedagogy because for the first time they as individuals find an outlet for musicality in a total context; they may be fine performers but have never known the satisfaction of **moving**, ensemble playing, or **especially of improvising and creating**," (Shamrock, p. 55; emphasis mine).

What are Improvisation and Creativity?

Improvisation

Beckstead (2013) defines improvisation as, "...the art of thinking and playing music at the same time," (p.69).

Shamrock (1986) gives us a definition as applied to the Orff Approach, "*Improvisation*-extending the skill with these components to the point where each individual can initiate new patterns and combinations as well as contribute to group activity based on this ability." (p.54).

fMRI studies done by Limb and Braun, cited in the Beckstead article, found that we access different parts of our brains when improvising than when we are performing prepared works. (p. 70)

Prepared works: planning, sequencing, and problem-solving.

Improvisation: daydreaming, meditation, and long-term multitasking.



Improvisation (continued)

Complex tasks are not necessary.

fMRI studies showed no difference in brain activity between simple improvisation (scalar, simple rhythm, etc.) and more complex improvisation such as jazz improvisation. (Beckstead, p. 70).



Creativity

According to Shamrock (1986), the definition of creativity when applied to the Orff Approach is, "*Creation*-combining material from any or all of the previous phases into original small forms such as rondos, theme and variations, and mini-suites; and of special significance, transforming literary material (fables, stories, poems) into miniature "theatre pieces" through whatever components seem appropriate..." (p. 54).

Improvisational Planning



Improvisational Planning

Non-sequential four-part improvisational planning process:

Two sides: musical and verbal

Musical side: exploration and run-through

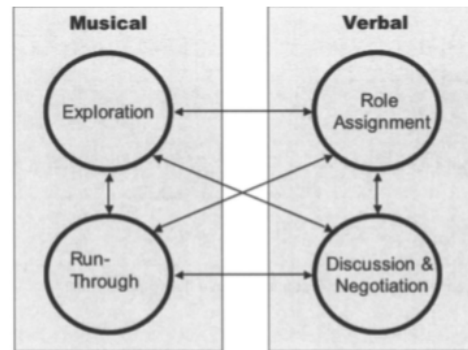
Verbal: role assignment, and discussion and negotiation

(Beegle 2010, p. 225)

Improvisational Planning (continued)

Students generally started in exploration or role assignment, and flowed smoothly between the other phases. (Beegle, p. 225)

They frequently returned to discussion and negotiation between run-throughs. (p. 225)



Planning Session Component Functions

Beegle found that each component served different functions. (p. 225)

Role assignment: helped children define the connection between the prompt and the improvised music, and helped them define the formal structure of the improvisation. (p. 225)

Exploration: served two functions: 1. Children explored musical material that (a) had no apparent connection to the task, and (b) as a strategy to generate and choose between musical ideas that could be used in a performance. (p. 225)

Run-through: "The multiple run-throughs functioned as a group rehearsal time so that children could perform together and make judgments as to the quality of the music." (p. 225)

Discussion and Negotiation: allows the children to verbally communicate ideas to the group, to reflect and evaluate the music and to make musical choices (p. 225)

Facing Your Fears





Keep Things Simple

“Improvisational activities do not need to add complexity or angst to the teaching process,” (Whitcomb 2013, p. 47).

Limit the number of variables to be addressed during the improvisation.

Keep in mind that the sophistication of student improvisations will increase with age: develop expectations accordingly. (Brophy 2005, p. 129)

Example: Hot Cross Buns (mm. 1, 2, and 4 are the same; m. 3 provides the opportunity for improvisation).



Use What You Know

Rhythmic and melodic vocabulary already taught and learned from your chosen method or approach (ex. Orff, Kodaly, GIML, Dalcroze, etc.)

Embed improvisation into existing skill building activities (Fill the Fruit Crates, and Everyone Has A Home are good examples of this).

Use familiar repertoire.

Use a “fallback” pattern.

(Whitcomb 2013, p. 49)

Example Activities

Sound and Movement

"In my teaching I tried to bring the students to the point where they could invent music of their own to accompany movement, however modest such inventions might be at first." (Orff 1963, p. 70)



Sound and Movement

Students echo vocal sounds “p,” “b,” “t,” “x,” “j,” and “m:” high, low, fast, slow, and with and without an accompanying movement.

Students sit in a circle and pass a motion using only hands and arms to the next person, making a sound to accompany it.

Evaluate where the circle was the most interesting in sound progression and movement variety.

(Thomas 1980, p. 58)



Sound and Movement (variations)

One variation is to have a leader in the center of the circle give silent motions using qualities of high, low, fast, slow, or sustained and the other students invent vocal sounds to accompany them.

Another is to have the students stand in a circle and use whole body motions instead of just hands and arms.

Students can improvise a hand play (like a puppet show), and others can accompany using improvised vocal sounds.

Students can accompany a shadow dancer behind an illuminated screen by inventing vocal sounds or using instruments or body percussion.

(Thomas 1980, p. 58)



Try It Out!

We are going to do the variation of this game with one leader providing silent motions for us to interpret.

Who wants to lead?

Everyone else, form a circle around the leader, and interpret their motions using vocal sounds.

Adding Visuals





Adding Visuals

Instructor can invent graphics using lines and dots and ask the students to make the graphics “come alive” through sound. (This being the Orff approach, a movement or speech-based method of making the graphic “come alive” would also work).

Students can create their own graphics and perform them with sound. Combinations of patterns can be used to create larger forms, such as ABA, AABA, etc.

(Thomas, p. 59)



Guess-A-Graphic and Move-A-Graphic (related to previous)

Guess-A-Graphic: a set of graphics is displayed to the class and the entire class or an individual interprets it through sound and the class tries to guess which graphic is being performed.

Move-A-Graphic: The same as Guess-A-Graphic, except the medium is movement instead of sound.

Guess-A-Move-A-Graphic: (name invented by me) A combination of both games, using movement AND sound together. Just as before, the class tries to guess which graphic is being performed.

(Thomas, p. 59)



Try It Out! (Guess-A-Graphic)

1. — — * * — * * —

2. * — — * * — * *

3. * * * * — — * *



Rotating Rondo



Rotating Rondo

This activity uses various Orff instruments, and presumes that the students have had previous study on them to form good playing technique (proper grip, manner of striking, mallet height, etc.)

This activity is also a game that includes singing and playing instruments together.



Rotating Rondo (continued)

The aim of this activity is to synthesize some basic musical elements such as the pentatonic scale and easy rhythmic ostinatos.

The class sits in a circle around four contrasting instruments, such as soprano glockenspiel, alto metallophone, alto xylophone, and temple blocks. (other instruments can be substituted for any of these, but these are the instruments suggested by Thomas in the article).

The students improvise rhythms and the instructor writes them on the board.

On the pitches G, and E (So and Mi), the students sing the song "Tinker Tailor, Soldier, Sailor" (Thomas suggests four solo voices, then joined by the group later in the song)



Rotating Rondo (continued)

The four soloists (or other students as selected by another method) move to the instruments in the center of the circle.

The instructor calls out the number of a rhythm pattern from the board, which is transferred to the pitched instruments by the students in the center.

The students will improvise a 16-beat pattern (the teacher plays the steady beat on the bass xylophone), and 16 more are given for free improvisation while the students in the outside circle clap the steady beat.

The instructor plays an 8-beat bridge to signal the center students (on the instruments) to return to their places in the outer circle, and the game repeats until all children have had a turn in the center on the instruments.



Try It Out!

"Tinker Tailor, Soldier, Sailor" text:

Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man,
beggar man, thief!

Alternating S-M pattern, ending on S.



Try It Out! (continued)

We need four soloists. The four soloists will sing “tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor” and the rest of the group will join in singing “rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief!”

Improvise three rhythm patterns and I will write them on the board.

For expediency, we can also use these prepared patterns:

1. Ta, ta, ta-di, ta
2. Ta, rest, ta-di, ta
3. Ta-di, ta-di, ta, ta

Singing Hands





Singing Hands

The instructor models a slow, pentatonic melody in C using Curwen signs.

Students imitate the pattern while following the Curwen signs.

Have one student give Curwen signs for the others, and they will sing what they see.

Evaluate what the class liked about each, or what they found difficult to sing.

The instructor can notate the song as the student uses the Curwen signs.

Longer phrases can be made from compatible fragments.

(Thomas, p. 59)



Try It Out!

I will sing a simple, slow, pentatonic melody in C (probably a different key), using Curwen signs.

Sing the melody using Curwen signs.

Select someone to lead the singing, giving Curwen signs (stay pentatonic) to the rest of the group, who will sing what is indicated. Limit each example to eight tones maximum.

Evaluate what you liked or found difficult to sing.

Fill The Fruit Crates



Fill the Fruit Crates

Since language is the basis for rhythm in the Orff approach, I use names of food items (in this case, fruits) to generate ta, ta-di, and rest.

Ta = grape; ta-di = apple; and rest = (empty bowl)

Draw (or better yet, use actual pictures) pictures of each fruit on the board.

Draw four crates beneath the pictures (or better yet, use real crates).

Place the fruits (or the empty bowl) in the crates in whatever order you wish. You may use a symbol more than once. Tell us your solution by performing it for the class.

Everyone Has A Home





Everyone Has A Home

This game is like "Fill the Fruit Crates" except it requires the students to use ALL of the available symbols, and uses standard notation. (It can be VERY easily adapted to use the pictures of fruits, etc. from the previous game).

Draw (or better yet, use actual pictures) the standard symbols for ta, ta-di, and rest.

Draw (or better yet, use actual pictures, or models) four houses beneath the collection of symbols.

The students must make sure there are no "homeless friends" by making sure there are no symbols left unused and everyone is in a house.

Improv Dance





Dance to the Beat

A way to include movement in the classroom. Kids REALLY, love this one. I mean it. REALLY.

Uses the core Orff concepts of dancing and playing.

Use music with a clear, steady beat (or set up an obnoxiously loud metronome).

Allow the students to create their own dance moves, BUT all moves MUST be performed ON THE BEAT. Demonstrate this so the students have an idea of what to do.

Try it out!



Follow the Music

This activity can be used to elicit movement-based responses to expressive elements of music, such as loud, soft, slow, fast, legato, staccato, happy, sad, angry, and a whole host of other emotions.

Ask the students to provide an example of an emotion. Play something at the piano (or have recordings prepared) that you think exemplifies that emotion. Ask them to show you their “happy dance” (if the emotion stated was happy, for example). Repeat for other emotions.

Prompt the students for an emotion by playing the SAME MUSIC for that emotion you just did when establishing the repertory of emotions you will be using for the activity. Repeat for each emotion, and go back and forth as desired between emotions.

When prompting, it is important to use the SAME MUSIC for each emotion you are asking for.

Try it out!

Conclusion



What can we take from all of this?

Improvisation is included in many district-level music curricula around the country.

Teachers support, and in some cases have experience or training in improvisation.

Many teachers are spending little to no instructional time on improvisational activities.

Extensive experience and training in improvisation is not required to teach students to be successful at improvisation.



Conclusion (continued)

Improvisation does NOT need to be complex.

Keeping things simple and using what you know can help students be successful at improvising.

Remember that students will develop more sophistication as they age: develop your expectations accordingly.

Improvisation can occur in any of the four core concepts of the Orff approach: singing, saying, dancing, or playing. The skill can be built in any of those four areas and transferred to the others.



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SYNTHESIS AND REFLECTION

The final component of this creative project remains a reflection of my experience in researching the extant literature regarding the Orff approach and the use of improvisation within it. I wanted to determine if the Orff approach would be able to assist me and other elementary general music teachers to include improvisation and creativity in the classroom, especially since these are areas that are not frequently covered in elementary general music classrooms and that I have not regularly explored since my undergraduate teacher preparation program. Ultimately, I am convinced that the Orff approach can indeed help with bolstering improvisation and creativity, and increased familiarity with the Orff approach can enable teachers to develop their own improvisational activities to fit the specific needs of their students. A surprising outcome of this project was the discovery that the Orff approach can be particularly useful for teaching students with special needs, which was particularly applicable to my current teaching situation.

Throughout the course of reviewing the extant literature pursuant to creating this presentation, I have become much more familiar with the Orff approach as a whole. This is something that I have recently begun to inquire about and study through the reading of scholarly articles, discussion with other educators who have had Orff training, and from perusal of published materials for Orff-Schulwerk, such as the *Musik für Kinder* series, written by Carl Orff himself, with assistance of Gunild Keetman. In completing this project, I significantly increased my knowledge and have come to the realization that I was already using the Orff approach, albeit in an unrefined manner. My lack of knowledge prior to completing this project prevented me from recognizing Orff's approach in my own teaching.

To the aspects I now realize I was already using from Orff's approach, I have added the four core concepts of Orff-Schulwerk, and the four pedagogical pillars. The four core concepts of the Orff approach are: singing, saying, dancing, and playing. These four activities represent

natural behaviors of children, and Orff considered them to be the ideal avenues for student learning. Orff believed that music and movement should go together. Singing and saying were activities that I was already familiar with, and had already incorporated into my teaching. Until learning that dancing and playing were core concepts of the Orff approach, I had limited their use in my teaching, mainly because I was uncomfortable with them, particularly dancing, and unsure how to make them effective, particularly for engaging the students in play through gamifying lessons. I have since found ways to make effective use of them, although I feel that there is significant room for improvement in these areas. For example, I should familiarize myself with prescribed folk dances and their accompanying music. This is completely in line with the Orff approach, which is designed to include aspects from the students' own cultures, such as folk songs, nursery rhymes, poems, stories, and dances.

The four pedagogical pillars of the Orff approach are exploring, imitating, improvising, and creating. The only one of these pillars that I had regularly used in my teaching is imitating. The strategy of having students echo patterns has been effective for me in the classroom. Imitating in the Orff approach is how students learn new concepts and skills from the teacher, and this corresponds to my overall philosophy as a teacher: I place heavy emphasis on developing skills and increasing what the students can do as musicians; process over product. Of course, a balance must be found between process and product as they are both important, and the Orff approach has helped me with this as well, as the curriculum for the Orff approach is the repertoire itself, whether that be songs, instrumental pieces, nursery rhymes, dances, stories, poems, or other literature from the student's culture.

Regarding the other three pedagogical pillars of the Orff approach, i.e. exploring, improvising, and creating, I began first to incorporate exploring into my teaching. My school has a significant instrumentarium of Orff xylophones and metallophones, which I decided to put together and begin using. The primary focus of using these instruments was to add accompaniment to learned songs in the classroom; an activity which has been effective and the

students have enjoyed. I began teaching the techniques for playing the xylophones and metallophones by having the students explore the sound possibilities of each. The students were allowed to play however and whatever they wished, within reason (no damaging technique or unsafe behavior was permitted), including exploration of pitch, timbre, mallet choice, striking technique, rhythm, dynamic changes, tempo, and possible articulations. I also found that exploration of vocal sounds can be an enjoyable task in the music classroom. Having the students explore the aforementioned elements with their voices can be a fun experience. From study of Orff-Schulwerk, I have come to realize the importance of exploration as a pedagogical tool. The students must be familiar with their abilities before they can improve them, and be familiar with the tools with which they are to make music if they are to learn to effectively do so. Some of this requires teacher guidance, but through exploration, students may find that they are more capable than they initially thought, especially when it comes to vocal music.

Improvising and creating were the two pedagogical pillars that I was least familiar with, although I did try to come up with a sample schema for the students to follow in order to teach them a thought process for the task. This was only mildly successful, and this is one of the factors that prompted me to investigate improvisation further. Creating is an activity that I have rarely used in my teaching, and when I learned that it was one of the pedagogical pillars of the Orff approach, I was bothered by how I had routinely avoided it, especially since I am a composer myself. One of the first improvisational activities I used in my teaching was planned improvisation, as described by Beegle (2010) in the article from the *Music Educators Journal*. I gave the students a visual prompt, i.e. a starry night sky, and asked them to work in pairs to create a short sound piece using the Orff xylophones and metallophones and then play it for the class. This activity was effective. The students were engaged and enjoyed the activity, and I was surprised with the level of creativity the students were able to achieve. Other improvisational activities that I have developed and used effectively are improvisational dancing, which entails playing music at the piano (or using a recording), and allowing the students to

invent their own dances within specific parameters, such as every motion must occur on the beat (I model first with a recording or a metronome to show what it means to move “on the beat”); and an activity that I call “Fill the Fruit Crates,” where the students after having learned to use the names of different fruits to represent rhythmic elements and patterns (use of natural rhythm of speech, per the Orff approach) must use them to fill four crates, which represent four beats of a measure. The students may fill the crates in any way they like, but must perform what they create for the class. I have had Kindergarteners improvising successfully in this manner. Creating larger works and exploring longer forms has eluded me thus far, but considering the ages and abilities of the students that I teach, it may not be an appropriate expectation at this time.

The Orff approach is particularly useful for teaching music to students with special needs, and I have used it for this extensively. At my current school, we have three sections of what is termed “Applied Skills” special education: non-diploma track students. These students range in age from 5-12, and common disabilities in those classes are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) of varying severity, Downs Syndrome, and Cerebral Palsy. The core concepts and pedagogical pillars have served as an effective guide for creating music lessons for these students. Dancing and playing have been very effective activities for the younger students in the Applied Skills classes in particular, but work well for all of the Applied Skills students. Singing and saying are not as effective for the younger students, as many of them are non-vocal (don’t talk, but can use/understand sign language or a LAMP to communicate) and some are non-verbal altogether (don’t use sign language or any means of word-based communication), but the older students can generally successfully engage in these activities. The oldest Applied Skills students at my current school can read basic rhythmic patterns from flash cards and clap them accurately. The Applied Skills students across the entire age range represented at my current school all enjoy dancing and playing, and will readily engage in both. I allow a lot of time for exploring with these students; they spend a significant amount of their class time exploring

the sound possibilities of different instruments in the classroom. Because of the nature of the students in these classes, and based on the recommendation of the special education mentor teacher for the district, these activities are repeated across several class periods to ensure retention.

Through study of the materials specific to improvisation in the Orff approach, I learned that improvisation does not need to be rhythmic or melodic, and activities such as saying and dancing can also be useful in teaching the students how to improvise and develop improvisational skills that can be transferred to improvising with rhythm, pitch, or melody. As an example, Thomas (1980) described an activity that involved a leader using somatic movements to prompt vocal improvisation from the other members of the class. Both the leader and the other members of the class are improvising in this case, as the leader is given tools (movements for high, low, fast, slow, connected, separated, etc.) and must choose which one to use and when, and the others are responding with vocal sounds that while prescribed by the leader, are not exact (they must choose how high or low, how fast or slow, etc.). From this information, I have developed a couple of improvisational dance activities. One is simply called "Improvisational Dance" and the students can create their own dances using their own moves as long as they also stay within defined parameters, such as every move must be made on the beat, or they must make two moves on each beat (utilizes rhythmic concepts). The other is called "Follow the Music" and the students must create a dance that corresponds with the character of the music (affective domain exercise).

From study of the extant literature on both the Orff approach in general, and specifically the use of improvisation within that framework, I have expanded my knowledge of the Orff approach overall, used that knowledge to develop improved ways of teaching music to students with special needs, learned specific activities for the fostering of improvisation in the elementary general classroom, which have inspired me to create similar activities of my own, and used greater knowledge of Orff-Schulwerk to develop improvisational activities that are engaging,

enjoyable, and effective. This project has assisted me in greatly improving my instruction overall, but specifically the instruction of improvisation. My students have enjoyed several of the activities that I have learned, and have displayed an impressive degree of creativity in engaging in them. I have become more confident in my abilities to teach students how to improvise and from that, I can continue to expand the use of improvisation in my classroom. This will allow the students more opportunities for self-expression and creativity and show them how the concepts and skills they learn in the music classroom can be used outside of the classroom as well. I hope to continue to increase my understanding of the Orff approach through continued research into the available literature, and possibly taking Orff Level 1 training at some point in the future and becoming a certified Orff teacher. From this, I predict that I will be able to continue to assist students in increasing their knowledge and skills in music, and to help them improve their own artistry so that they can effectively use music as a medium of self-expression.

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APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPT OF PRESENTATION

This document is a transcript of the presentation I gave on 2 March 2022, pursuant to the fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Music degree at Ball State University. The presentation began at approximately 1930 on 2 March 2022 and lasted around one hour and seven minutes.

IC: If you're expecting Milton Berle jokes, forget it. I tell my students that the only jokes I have are the bad ones. And that usually elicits some students to laugh, particularly the older ones. I had a band director in high school who told us that one of our jobs is to laugh at his bad jokes. We said, "yeah, good one."

So, this is Fostering Improvisation and Creativity in the Elementary General Classroom Using the Orff Approach. I got interested in the Orff approach about four years ago when I got started at Grissom, and I found that we had a full set of those barred instruments like you see over here. And this is the first school I ever taught at that actually had them, and I was excited to use them. And of course in my preparation (undergraduate program), that's what I thought Orff was, and I did some research on it and I found that it's a lot more than that. I found out how complex it is, but simple on this side. If you'd like me to sell you the Orff approach, you can speak with me after the presentation and I'll gladly sell you the Orff approach.

Alright, and of course this is just some basic info here, just like I said I'm Ian Clerget and CRPR 698 is the course. You are of course at Ball State University, and if you didn't know that, we need to talk later. Dr. Gerrity is my advisor.

So, why are you here? I'm going to give you a brief overview of the Orff approach, in case you don't know what it is or what it is about. I felt that I would have wanted more specific information on that area in my undergraduate. We got some information and of course it was covered in the textbook, but I would have liked to have more information than what was provided.

To provide ways to incorporate improvisation and creation in the classroom. Those are two of the pedagogical pillars of the Orff approach.

And of course in pursuant to the requirements for the Master of Music degree at Ball State University.

So, what's the problem? Why is this even a thing? Well, there was a research study done by Gruenhaugen and Whitcomb asking music educators from around the country how much time they spend out of their day with improvisation activities or creative activities, where students get to create for themselves. If you remember your three domains of learning, this is affective domain big time here. It's also psychomotor and cognitive as well of course.

So 58% said they spent 0-10 percent, so you're already seeing there that's the majority of the people responding to this survey saying they spent no time at all or very little. 26% indicated somewhere in the middle (11-20) and 16% indicated they spent 20 percent or more. Notice the font is bigger. **Stuff that bigger and stuff that's bold**, I want you to pay special attention to that. 73% of them indicated that improvisation was included in district level music curricula. If you don't know the Indiana standards for music education, in particular for elementary general music, improvisation is included in your creating standard. I believe that's standard 3 now, but it used to also be in the 2010 standards and the original MENC standards

from 1994. So, it's been there for a long time. Take a look at this slide. They also found that 90% of the educators polled had some training in it, stemming from certification in Orff, Kodaly, Dalcroze, or GIML, or seminars like this, professional development.

So, if this study is generalizable to the greater population of elementary general music educators, and if my experience is any kind of benchmark, it really isn't much of a benchmark, and talking with my colleagues and working with other people that I know, it's pretty likely generalizable to the larger population. We can reasonably conclude that most elementary music teachers have at least some training in improvisation. How to get kids to improvise and most of them are not including this in their instruction. So, they've had some training, meaning they should ideally know how to do this, but the survey indicated that a lot of them are not doing this. So maybe we can help them there. So what's the solution? I believe the Orff approach can effectively foster this improvisation and creativity and help us out in the elementary general music classroom.

So, a brief overview of the Orff approach. Carl Orff 1895-1982, German composer and music teacher, famous for Carmina Burana, some of you may have performed that, at least most of you probably know it at least the first movement, O Fortuna. The Orff Schulwerk was invented in the 1920s so this has been around for at least a century. The American Orff Schulwerk Association was founded in May of 1968 here at Ball State University, but I don't know when it left. Dr. Gerrity, I don't know if you know that history, or not.

KG: I don't know when it didn't stay here any longer.

IC: Dr. Ester tipped me off to that, "yeah, did you know the Orff Schulwerk Association started here at Ball State?"

So, what is the Orff Schulwerk? You've probably heard the term before, but let's get some definitions and some info. Orff Schulwerk is an approach to teaching music in an elemental manner. So, what do we mean by that? It comes from the Latin "elementarius" meaning of the elements, beginnings, or first principles. Music and movement provide the primary forms for the Orff approach. Dalcroze was a huge influence on Orff. Dalcroze came out, I'm not sure exactly when off the top of my head, some time in the late 1800s, so Orff knew about it by that point in time and he wanted to try to see if he could do something similar. He liked it, he's like this is really good, music and movement let's put them together that's really great. Do the pedagogical pillars, we move on to that from music and movement now. We do this through exploration, imitation, improvisation, and creation. The source material for the literature comes from the child's culture. This is adaptable to any culture any language any where in the world and it's been adapted for over a hundred years. Literature, nursery rhymes, and folk songs, things like that that come from the student's culture. Those are the things you're going to use as your primary sources of information. Like you know how you use the natural rhythm of speech for rhythms like a quarter note you can say that's "grape," for the two eighth note pair is the "apple" and rest you can just say "rest" or say nothing. So you can say grape, grape, apple grape, and then have them clap it. I actually use pictures with kindergartners and let them arrange them any way they like, they just have to perform it for me. So you can do that as well. So that's what that is, it comes from their own language, their own culture whatever type of rhythmic speech you can think of. Takadimi is huge and you can replace that method with Takadimi. It's primarily seen as this is something that, and I'm not sure where this comes from, is for elementary aged children. However, you can use it for students of any age. You can use this for kindergartners, preschoolers, and just like I'll talk about in a minute it's very beneficial for use with students with special needs. I'll tell you a couple of stories about that too, because we have what's called the Life Skills program. In the old days, we would have called it severe and

profound disabilities, and at some point, it was called non-diploma track, but I don't know if that's still the term they use. I'm not privy to when they change all that in all honesty, it's just a teacher will come up to me using a new term, and I'll have to ask them what it means and then they'll explain it. You can use this for K-12, and you can even go beyond that. You can use it for adults, senior citizens; the Orff approach is really versatile.

So, like I said we have the Life Skills kiddos at Grissom Elementary School, and we are the only school in Muncie Community Schools that does this. I do use the xylophones and the metallophones with them depending on the specific class. If you've ever heard the phrase, "if you've met a child with autism, you've met one child with autism." And that's very true, they're all different. You can't characterize them at all in general, they're all different. With the adaptability of the Orff Schulwerk system, it really works well with students with special needs and it's very exploratory and you can let them be a little more free and they're still learning at their own pace and in their own way. We can talk a little bit more about that possibly later. So here's some foundational concepts and I've kind of organized this so that it makes a little rhyme, "singing, saying, dancing, playing." These are four things that I have in my mind as I'm designing lessons at Grissom for the kids. In using the Orff approach for anything I'm doing, those four things are always in my mind and they're great things to keep in mind just in case the kids blow through your lesson and in fifteen minutes, they've mastered the concept, you've given the assessment, it's all good, you know they can do it, you've done some independent practice with them and they're great for it. Now what do you do? Pick one! Pick one you haven't done: singing, saying, dancing, playing. Put on a YouTube recording and let them dance to it; let them get up and move. That's also an avenue for improvisation: improvisational dancing. We will talk about that in a minute or two. Improvisation doesn't have to be melodic or rhythmic improvisation for them to be able to learn the skill of improvising and then they can transfer that to whatever else you want them to do. The primary thing that I've seen in my experience, and this is my eleventh

year of teaching elementary music is that when you are trying to get kids to improvise, they're not sure what it is or how to do it. They're just not sure where to start, and they're not comfortable with taking that leap forward and saying I'm just going to try something. So doing something like this really helps, even for improvising singing. I've got some examples of that down the road so I won't spend too much time on this now.

This is all based on a child's natural behavior. It can be used to facilitate all of the pedagogical pillars. Orff likened this to the concept of the wild flower. The wild flower flourishes in its natural environment without much cultivation. And here's another quote directly from the man himself "We all know from experience that wildflowers thrive in abundance while carefully tended garden flowers disappoint us sometimes; they lack the strength of natural growth." This was something he very much believed in: this idea that they have to be free like a wildflower. Of course, we know that practically we can't just let them go, but that's kind of what it's based on and what his thinking was when he was developing this.

So, here's some definitions of the pedagogical pillars. Dr. Shamrock, who by the way if you really want to know about the Orff approach, there's a lot of stuff in the source material that I read from Dr. Shamrock that didn't make it into this presentation because it's not related exactly to what we're talking about, she's the one you want to look up start with her, because she's got a lot of great stuff. There's also the article that Carl Orff wrote himself, sort of talking about the Schulwerk. I cite it here in the presentation and I can give you that reference if you want to look that article up too just to see what the man himself had to say about his own method.

So, exploration is the discovery of the possibilities in both sound and movement. So this is like the first day they've ever seen the barred instruments and they don't know what they are, they've never held a mallet before in their lives so you show them how to hold the mallets, and

you say here's a pentatonic scale on the bars, see what you can do with it, and literally that's it. What sounds does this make, can you make a melody out of it? Just like the concept of a wildflower, you sit a child down, take all the bars off except the ones for the pentatonic scale (c, d, e, g, a) and you leave them alone and you don't say anything, what do you think they're going to do? They're going to start playing, exploring. They're going to naturally do that.

Imitation is developing basic skills in rhythmic speech and body percussion, so this is where we get clapping, stomping, finger snapping, and thigh slapping, known in German as "patschen." Anything else: you can give them a non-pitched percussion instrument to play, that's something else you can do. So this is where the children are going to be learning new things from you is through imitation.

Improvisation. This one we want to keep in mind. This is extending the skill with these components to the point where each individual can initiate new patterns and combinations as well as contribute to group activity. That's important, contributing to group activity and we're going to see that in some of the canned exercises we're going to talk about here in a little bit. It's using what they've learned to generate something of their own to contribute to whatever the group is doing. That's kind of the idea of also how you would assess if the improvisation was successful.

Now, creation. Combining material from any of all of the previous phases into original small forms such as rondos, theme and variations, mini suites, and of special significance transforming literary materials, so fables stories, and poems into miniature theatre pieces through whatever components seem appropriate. So, especially if you're interested in teaching elementary general music, you should be getting ideas from that definition, some great activities to do. My kids love that: when I give them a short story or poem prompt and then I say here are some available instruments, choose what you want and now one person is going to narrate and

the rest of the group is going to improvise sounds that go with what the story is. They love that, and that's also improvisation. Now what's the difference here? They seem kind of similar right? The main difference between improvisation and creation is "original small forms." Organizing what they've done into more coherent pieces. That's what the creation aspect is versus the improvisation. Improvisation, they come up with their own four bar rhythm or a short four bar melody or a short four pitch melody, something like that, something that doesn't really connect to anything larger than itself. It's just sort of sui generis, you know. Well, with this (creation), it's things that are going to fit together and create something larger.

So, consider this, many teachers become attracted to the pedagogy because for the first time these individuals find an outlet for musicality in a total context, they may be fine performers but have never had the satisfaction of moving (in bold), remember things in bold are important, ensemble playing, or especially of improvising and creating. How many composers do we have in the room? Show of hands, who writes? One? I did when I was an undergrad. Ok. I wasn't an official composition student or anything like that, just sort of found it cathartic to write my musical thoughts down and make them into pieces that might be potentially played or sung someday. That's consistent with my experience when I was an undergrad as well. Not that many people I knew when I was an undergrad here didn't do any creating. Improvisation, yeah maybe if they were in jazz band they knew a little something about it. The rest of us, we kind of assumed we were clueless.

So, what are improvisation and creativity? So now we are going to zoom in the microscope. Beckstead defines improvisation as the art of thinking and playing music at the same time. Full disclosure, the Beckstead article was about instrumental improvisation and there were some fMRI studies that he quoted as well, and some of them made it into the presentation here, but I thought that was a particularly germane way of putting it. If you're

thinking music and playing music at the same time, that's improvisation. I think that gives us a good definition for working. So here we are back with Dr. Shamrock giving us the definition as applied to the Orff approach. We saw this earlier: extending the skill with these components to the point where each individual can initiate new patterns and combinations as well as contribute to group activity.

So this is just some interesting background information here. These MRI studies showed that we access different parts of our brains when we improvise than when we are performing prepared works. For prepared works, we access the parts of our brain for sequencing, problem solving, and planning. For improvising, it's daydreaming, meditation, and long-term multitasking. I thought that was particularly interesting. One important point to note here is that complex tasks are not necessary. They don't have to make a really complicated, really complex, layered thing in order to count as improvisation. We'll see some of that as we get down the road, but I think the major point that the fMRI studies gives us is that there's no difference in brain activity between something simple or an improvisation that's complex. No difference at all: it's the same benefit to your mind.

Ok, we already saw this in her definition of creativity so let's start talking about some improvisational planning. (the definition of creating as given by Dr. Shamrock was provided on the slide again. I did not read it aloud a second time). Ok, this is for an activity called planned improvisation. This was one that I did with a group of mild cog (mild interventions/cognitive disabilities) special ed students and had a lot of success with this one. This uses what's called the "non-sequential, four-part improvisational planning process," a term coined by Beegle in her study in 2010. There are two sides to this of course, the musical and verbal side. Musical is exploration and run-through, and then verbal is role assignment and discussion and negotiation. So, what they're going to do with planned improvisation is you get them together and it's more of

a social learning thing where they have to work together to come up with what they're going to play. The rule I always take with it is, well I did this for the first time, I said you all have to play the same thing so agree on what you're going to do and then you do it. Of course, this could be as complex as you want it to be. Right, there's four of you in the group, you've got four different instruments or three instruments and a singer (or three percussionists and a recorder) or whatever and you know when they're letting us play recorders again (due to the pandemic), I'll do that. When they get together they have to work and figure out what everybody's going to do and then they perform for the class. So this is what it looks like: students generally started in exploration or role assignment so, I think it's worth noting here that when Beegle did the qualitative study on this particular process, she had the kids do this and her findings are what I'm referring to here in the past tense. They generally started in role assignment or exploration and they float smoothly between the other phases so if you see all the arrows (in the diagram on the slide) basically all point to each other, any phase can go to any other phase. Period. From anywhere to anywhere they can start wherever they want, and it can go wherever they want until they come up with a product. They frequently return to discussion and negotiation. So, these are what functions each phase served. Role assignment helps the kids define the connection between the prompt and the improvised music, so what you're going to do with planned improvisation is you give them a prompt. Ok, a poem, some literature, or my favorite one is show them a work of art, put a picture up on the board if you have, as most schools now do, a projector screen hooked up to your computer, you put it up on the projector screen. Say work together creating something that you think will express what the painting expresses. Tell me what the painting is saying, but say it with sound. Role assignment helps them try to figure that out: what is it actually saying to us and what are we going to do? Exploration serves two functions: 1. They explore the musical material that either had no apparent connection to the task (you can imagine what that sounded like), and also 2. As a strategy to generate and choose between these ideas that can be used for performance. So, the second one is right

where we want them. That's the ideal: we want them exploring those things and thinking what am I going to use versus what am I going to cut out. Did I like that or did I not like that? There's always an evaluation component to it. Run-throughs: run-throughs function as a group rehearsal time so obviously they're going to try out what they thought of and then decide whether they liked it or not and then go back to negotiation where they are working together. Like I said, it's social, and then they get to decide if they like it or if they don't like it. If they don't like it, do you want to change something and then maybe make different musical choices with the time you give them before they have to perform?

Facing your fears (a picture of Luke Skywalker facing Darth Vader in the cave on Dagobah is on the screen). Is there anybody in the room that doesn't know who they are? Ok, I'm happy to see that (nobody's hand was raised). As I was saying earlier, as an elementary teacher, you make these references and they just go over the kids' heads sometimes. It's like, ok tough crowd guys. So, if you don't know this scene here, Luke is training to be a Jedi Knight on Dagobah, and Yoda sends him into a cave. He tells him that he doesn't need his weapons, but Luke brings his lightsaber anyway. Darth Vader comes around the corner, big surprise because nobody expected him to be here. So, they have a little fight in the cave and Luke wins, beats Vader and his head rolls off to the side. The helmet explodes. Do you remember whose face was in the helmet? It's Luke's face. So Luke is facing his fears: he's afraid that he's going to become like his father. So, what does this have to do with anything? You're facing your fears learning to teach improvisation. Some things that will help. Keeping things simple. Ok, this is really one of the important things I wanted to bring out with this is that it doesn't have to be complex. We see that again from Whitcombe here. The big way to do that is to limit the number of variables to be addressed during the improvisation. Ok, so if you want them to create a four beat pattern, show them all four beats (I have an activity for that actually and it works really well), so you limit the variables for example have them change only the third beat.

The example is ta, ta, tadi, ta, but you have ta, tadi, and rest available. I want you to change only the third beat to something different, so they'll use ta, or rest instead of tadi there. Ok, go around and clap whatever you decided. They're only worrying about that one thing so it's going to be whatever they decide and that limits you to one variable for that particular activity. Ok, so also keeping in mind that as they age, it's amazing I have a two-year-old and a three-year-old and it's amazing the things they developed without anyone teaching them. Just through their physical development, they were able to do certain things. It's like all of a sudden you can dress yourself or tie your own shoes. How did they learn that? They got bigger and figured it out. That's kind of what happens here. The sophistication of improvisations will increase with age so develop your expectations accordingly. So, obviously kindergarteners aren't going to be developing a rondo using the pentatonic scale in 5/4 Dave Brubek time. They're not going to do that. The example that Brophy gave was using Hot Cross Buns. Measures 1, 2, and 4 are the same but then measure three provides the different measure and they can do something else there that wasn't what was originally there.

Use what you know. So, this refers to things like rhythmic vocabulary that we've already taught, so stick to that because the variable for them is going to be how do I improvise? That's the new thing for them so limit the number of new things and embed it into skill building activities and this is something where a couple of activities like "Fill the Fruit Crates" and "Everyone Has a Home," those are good examples of how to do this as well. Use them in your repertoire. Use a song that they already know. You can even do that if you're just teaching a new skill, revisit stuff they already know that way the only variable is the skill they haven't learned yet. You already know this song and all the verses you taught it to them a month ago. As soon as you play the introduction on the piano they're going to know exactly what song it is and they're going all start singing because that's been my experience over eleven years. Use a fallback pattern. What this is, is either a melodic or rhythmic pattern or whatever it is you want them to do that they can

use if their mind goes blank and they can't think of anything. So if I'm having the kids do a rhythmic improvisation over four beats and they've got ta, tadi, and rest to use. If they can't think of anything I might tell them just use ta, ta, tadi, ta. If you can't think of anything just do that. What you'll have is some kids that do just that, and some (many) won't. They'll try NOT to use the fallback pattern because especially if you tell them that's what it is, they won't want to be the one who had to use the fallback pattern. A little reverse psychology there.

So now we're in the part where you guys don't just get to sit there and listen to me fly away in my beautiful balloon with all my hot air, we actually get to do some of this stuff.

Sound and movement. Carl Orff, "in my teaching I tried to bring the students to the point where they could invent music of their own to accompany movement however modest such inventions might be." So, as I said, he's saying the same thing here, it doesn't have to be complex. All right, keep it simple. I keep saying that because it's one of the things that's going to allow you to have success with doing this. The kids keep it simple, and it goes a long way. So, here's an activity called sound and movement. So, the students will echo some vocal sounds, so you can have high, low, fast, slow, and with or without any accompaniment. So you can do this in any one of those variable ways. So, the students will sit in a circle and they'll pass a motion using only the hands and arms to the next person making a sound to accompany it. So, what they'll do is they'll have to invent a motion so I'll take puh for example because it's the one right there first and I go (makes motion). That's the motion I just passed along, so I go puh, the next person has to do a motion and pick a sound. Ok eventually you're going to evaluate where the circle was the most interesting in sound progression and movement. So this is just kind of getting them to think about what they did. Evaluation is always a good part of this. So one variation is to have a leader in the center of the circle to give silent motions using qualities of high, low, fast, slow, sustained, etc. and the other students have to invent vocal

sounds. Another is you have the students stand in a circle, they use whole body motions instead of just hand and arms. You can also have the students do a hand play that the others have to invent vocal sounds for (like the game on Whose Line is It Anyway?). The students can also invent vocal sounds to accompany a shadow dancer behind a screen. I like that idea, but I don't have the screen I can illuminate or else we'd be doing that one for something tomorrow in class. What we're going to do is try this out by having one leader providing silent motions for us to interpret using vocal sounds. So, here's a question. Who wants to lead? Give us some motions to interpret? Ok, let's go over there where we have a little more room.

(The participants have moved to an open space in the music education classroom)

We're going to go anti-clockwise just to be fun.

What you're going to do is you have to improvise the body motions that you want us to interpret. What we have to do is use those vocal sounds on the beat with what she does so we're going anti-clockwise. I'll start. (the game proceeds while the leader in the center invents motions for us to interpret using improvised vocal sounds)

Ok, let's go a little faster this time. This is always one of the variables you can change, especially if you're doing improvisation with the kids. Let them start slow, and then see if they can do it a little faster. See if they can think a little bit more on their feet. Remember, it's thinking and making music at the same time. We're thinking and making sound at the same time so let's try to go a little faster. Now that means you're setting the pace (the leader).

(The game repeats, this time the leader gives motions for us to interpret at a faster pace)

Ok, now we're going to be a little more free. Are you guys familiar with "More Cowbell" from Saturday Night Live? Ok, it's going to be kind of like that except I want you to explore the vocal sounds. We're not limiting ourselves to the sounds we had before. This variation you can take the reins off a little bit. You decide which vocal sound you want to make for each motion she gives us.

I want to do one more variation on this because there's other stuff I want to do tonight as well. But there's another variation you can do with this and that is show us what you're going to do for fast, and then for slow. Why don't we just leave it there: we're limiting the variables, just fast and slow. You have to invent a vocal sound that represents what she does. If she does the fast motion you've got to make a sound you think is fast.

(The participants play the game again with the above described variation)

By doing stuff like this, you're teaching the kids how to improvise. They have to make decisions and they have to do it on the fly. They have to think ahead, ok my turn is coming next so I have to get something ready. Alright, let's head back over and see the next one.

Adding visuals. This one I think we can just do from our seats. So, you can invent graphics using lines and dots (you'll see what I mean in just a minute here) and you can ask them to make graphics come alive through sound. So, in terms of what you see again, it's always showing me what the prompt is in sound. Use sound to show me what the prompt is telling you. This being the Orff approach, you can use movement or speech-based methods instead of melody or rhythm. You can have them say something or you can have them move to it and then later on they can create their own graphics and they can have combinations of sound

patterns that are used to create larger forms. Improvisation and creation were two of the pedagogical pillars we learned about earlier.

So, guess a graphic and move a graphic. These are always fun to do. Guess a graphic. You give them a set of the lines and dots (I'll show you what those are on the next slide), an individual interprets one of them and the rest of the students have to try to guess which one they did. Move a Graphic is the same as a Guess A Graphic, but the medium is movement instead of sound. And then Guess A Move A Graphic is just a combination of both. Ok, so we're going to do Guess A Graphic. For example if I do this (I clap a pattern representing one of the graphics displayed on the slide), which one was it? (The participants correctly identify the graphic I represented in sound). Hold up the number of fingers for which one you thought it was. Anyone want to try one? Ok, choose one and we all have to guess what it is. Hold up the number of fingers for the one you think it was. (The participants correctly guess their peer's interpretation). You can do this with five or as many as you like, but I limited us to three (limiting the variables), keeping it simple for you guys especially since I didn't want to take too much time with this one, but that's a fun one to do, and then you can have the students write their own using whiteboards and markers and trade with other students and have them interpret what they wrote.

Ok, Rotating Rondo. This one uses some of the Orff instruments from over there, it uses four of them. This presumes that the students have had previous study on them to form good playing technique, such as they know how to strike, they know how to hold the mallets, they know the correct mallet height, etc. It's what I call General Barred Instrument Technique (GBIT). This includes singing and playing instruments together so you're going to get standards seven and eight all in one lesson right off the bat. In general, when you use the Orff approach, you can really pack the standards into one lesson; you can get like three or four of them all at once pretty easily, especially if you're having them self-evaluate. So, the aim of this is to synthesize

some of the basic musical elements such as pentatonic scale and easy rhythmic ostinatos. So what you do is have a class sitting in a circle around four contrasting instruments. Those are going to be our contrasting instruments (motions to the instruments set out in the open area of the classroom). Thomas suggested alto xylophone, alto metallophone, soprano glockenspiel, and temple blocks. The school of music had everything except temple blocks in here: no actually, there's some over there. If it was a snake it would have bit me. Other instruments can be used to substitute for any of these but these were what Thomas suggested we use because they're different enough from one another. It just depends on what your school happens to have. It's kind of a sad state of affairs, but in MCS, we've had several elementary schools close over the years and so my closet is full of stuff that came from other schools. For example, I have three complete textbook series because they all came from other schools. So, the students are going to improvise rhythms and then you write them on the board. (I could not find a marker to use with the whiteboard in the classroom for this presentation, so I did not have the participants invent rhythms and then write them on the board as the activity would normally require. Instead, we used the fallback pattern of ta, ta, tadi, ta). You're going to use the pitches of So and Mi in the key of C. I used the solfege just in case you're not singing the song in the key of C. Where are the tenors in the room? C is kind of low when you're singing with kids to be quite honest. I routinely transpose things up to D or Eb because it's just too low for me to sing comfortably in the key of C. If you're in C and you have a low La, then that's A2 for me and that's a little on the low side but D tends to be right where it's nice. It's not too high for the kids and not too low for me. If you're a mezzo or a baritone, you're good. You're good for those kids but interestingly enough there's been some research that didn't make it here, but there's been some research that suggests that children's voices are not as high as we once thought. I can't remember the exact date on that so I can't tell you how old the information is but we're starting to find children's voices aren't as high-pitched as we previously thought. That or something else is going on and that they've actually lowered over time, but I digress.

So, you're going to sing the song "Tinker Tailor Soldier Sailor." Does anybody not know this song? Hey, I get to teach you a song! (I quickly teach the participants the song by rote. They do a great job singing it). So, we need four soloists, or you can select your instrument players by using another method if you like. The four soloists will sing the first part of the song, and everyone joins in for the last part of the song. After the song is sung, the four soloists move to the instruments in the center of the circle. The instructor calls out the number of a rhythm pattern from the board, then they have to transfer that to the pitched instruments. They improvise four measures of four beats each, so that's sixteen beats total. The teacher plays the steady beat on the bass xylophone, or another instrument. After the first sixteen beats, the students will get sixteen more for free improvisation (they can play whatever they want). During this, the students in the outside circle clap the steady beat. The really complex thing about this is that next, the instructor plays an 8-beat bridge on the recorder to signal the students in the center to return to their places in the outer circle. The game repeats until all children have had a turn on the instruments in the center.

Raise your hand if you didn't follow all of that the first time through. I didn't. I had to reread this four or five times before I finally figured out what the kids were supposed to do. So you can see there are a lot of steps in this which is the reason why you really do want them to have experience on the instruments first so that you're not explaining the basic stuff at the same time you're trying to do all of this. They're going to get lost in all of it and the lesson will actually change. Another characteristic of the Orff approach is that your objective can change during the lesson depending on the needs of the students. Whatever they are showing you, wherever they are that's where you go. That's sort of also the wildflower thing, but ok. So, here we're going to try it out. If you were doing this in an elementary school, you may have to have them go

through the text first, repeat after you, then learn the melody, etc., building up the fundamentals first. Fortunately for me, I don't have to do all of that because you're all trained musicians.

(The group moves to the activity space in the room and plays the game once successfully).

You can allow the students to select the instrument they want to play instead of assigning them. Raise your hand if you have no idea what you're doing with any of these instruments. Ok, should be pretty self-explanatory, but again like I said if you're teaching an elementary class they might not have a clue how to hold the mallets, how to strike the instruments, nothing like that. I was going to be really funky and bring my recorder but I left it at school, so I'm going to cheat and use the piano instead. The pentatonic scale is another good one to use if you're doing melodic improvisation. It is just gold because it sounds beautiful pretty much no matter what you do with it. And it's used in pretty much every culture in the world. Many people know songs that use the pentatonic scale and aren't aware of it.

This activity can be extended in a lot of different ways. One way is to use more extended techniques (rolls, double strikes, multiple mallet techniques, etc.), and basically you're going to be more detailed with how you vary this one in terms of what you're actually asking them to do. You can expand this to major scale, minor scale, change the key, target specific skills with specific rhythms, etc. You guys have been good sports and I really appreciate that. Let's go back to the chairs.

KG: As we are transitioning back I know you've got some more stuff in there, some more examples but for the sake of time because I know these guys are probably going to have to start getting going soon, you want to go ahead and try to get to the end.

IC: Yes, absolutely.

Alright, so the lightning version. So, singing hands. If any of you have had Dr. Ester, you know the whole (Curwen sign) thing he likes to do and make you sing it. That's basically what this is, except you use the pentatonic scale and slowly go through it. Then you give them the chance to invent melodies themselves by having them come up and give the class Curwen signs to sing and they have to sing it.

Fill The Fruit Crates. Ok, this one I invented and I actually got kindergarteners improvising with this one. It's all right there, I use grape as ta, apple as tadi, and empty bowl for the rest. I actually have pictures that I use and I let them come up and rearrange them however they like and then the class performs what's there. You could use real fruit and real crates as well. It's a nice opportunity to use some manipulatives with the kids. The way I started it was I drew four crates on the board, and then you could either draw in the fruit that fills it then you say now you're going to do that, but you get to decide which fruit goes where. Then, they have to perform it for the class.

Everyone Has A Home. This one is kind of like Fill the Fruit Crates, except every symbol has to be used. If you're using ta, tadi, and rest with Fill the Fruit Crates, they don't have to use rest for example. In this one, they would have to. So, what I did was draw a street with four houses and say ok, send everybody home. If they don't send someone home, I'd say hey he needs to go home, you have to tell the rest which home to go to, get him off the street! It's getting dark out, and his mama's waiting for him. That sort of thing.

Improv dance. This is working some movement into the lesson. The kids really love this one. I mean really. They love this one. This is dancing and playing. What I do is (I did this with an obnoxiously loud metronome on a music stand), I put a metronome on a music stand and let it tick away. You let them create their own dance moves but they have to be performed on the beat. So, they have to be listening to that metronome or whatever they're dancing to and make sure that whatever they're doing is on the beat. You might have to demonstrate this so they have an idea of what they're doing because if they've never done it before then they're not really sure what it's supposed to look like. And it doesn't matter how awful your dance moves are, because if they're laughing at you it's a good thing: it means they're interested and they're now thinking "I know what I'm going to do." Then you get them doing it on the beat and now they're improvising.

Follow the music. This is another one that I have my kids do. You use emotions or expressive elements such as loud or soft, fast or slow. What you do is provide an example of the motion, you play something on the piano or have recordings prepared that you think exemplifies the emotions. Whatever dance they come up with for each emotion is what they will use to respond to the different music you will play. Play the same music for whatever emotion you connected it with so you're connecting music with an emotion and then you're playing, keeping it the same. Then what you do is you change it as you go through the activity, so you start with whatever your happy song is, then you do the sad song, and after the sad song maybe to you back to happy. Then you go to angry or whatever else. The sky's the limit on this, you get them following and thinking and responding, and it's important to remember to use the same music you connected with the emotions and that's another way to do this.

Here's my conclusion. What do we take from all of this? So, I went through a lot of stuff tonight. This was a big information dump I realized that so I'm trying to make this as concise as

possible. Improvisation is included in many district level music curricula around the country and if it's not it's in the national standards. Teachers support and in some cases have had experience and training in improvisation. However, many teachers are not spending much time doing this with their kids in the classroom. In-depth experience and training in improvisation isn't required to be able to actually teach students to be successful with it. It doesn't need to be complex: it can be very simple. Use what you know. Remember that they will develop more sophistication the older they get and keep this in mind when you're planning improvisation activities. It's also good to keep in mind with that particular point that older students will thrive with something more complex. They will want something that's more difficult, something that's more challenging, something that's more musically interesting, something that has more they can wrap their minds around. Not that they wouldn't be successful with something easier, but they'll thrive with things that are a little more complex. Remember that improvisation can occur in any of the four core concepts: singing, saying, dancing, and playing. Use any one of those to get them improvising and then use what they learned to transfer to something else. They can develop the skill in any one of those and then move it to anything else you want them to do. Because it's a generalizable thing. Ok, references if you want them. There's some good articles on this if you're really interested in the Orff approach. Thank you.

(I had a student ask a question regarding the use of head voice for males in elementary general teaching. This was not relevant to improvisation or the Orff approach specifically, but a general question regarding elementary school music teaching. I have not included the discussion in this transcript for that reason).