

Borrowing the Chapter's Instrumentarium Nicole Sumner

This winter, I borrowed the NCAOSA instrumentarium and split it between two schools that were each beginning an Orff program. For each school, I had been hired to get their Orff program going and to purchase instruments. The borrowed NCAOSA instruments served to supplement what I had bought with their respective budgets.

The school I'll call "School #1" is a K-8 school for children with "learning differences," where I teach K through 5 in groups of 7- 14 students. School #2 is a public elementary school with 12 classes of 19 to 24 students. I also used a few of our chapter's instruments for classes at Yick Wo Elementary, the school where I have led an Orff program for four years.

As an Orff teacher who works primarily with early elementary students, I have had the opportunity to work with many children during their first experiences with mallet instruments. Every time, I am excited and inspired by the things that come up, both for the students, and for me. Below are some of the most note-worthy memories and lessons from these two sets of students during their time with the instruments:

School #1:

- addressing the challenge of unfilled spaces in a pentatonic scale: making the absent notes relevant so the class isn't spent trying to keep students from putting "missing" bars back in the spaces
- sitting alone at an instrument cuts down on boundary issues
- detailed comparisons of old and new instruments
- seeing their joy at learning to play together to produce a storm, a song, a solo, a supporting role in a piece, an instrumental story
- instrument preferences heightened; working to connect with all instrument sounds and sizes
- using prodigy skills such as instant memorization of numbers, memorization of whole pieces of classical music; addressing their difficulty stopping once started
- addressing fixation and attachment to particular sounds (repetition, possessiveness) or conversely, extreme aversion to ringing tones of the metallophones

School #2:

- The classes who (in groups of 3) got to assemble their instruments from scratch, with no directions, have shown more focus and respect for the instruments.
- There is awe at this school for the sheer number of instruments and

intensity of sound when they play. They see themselves as having the power to make amazing music or amazing chaos.

- Seeing the wear and tear of the old NCAOSA instruments compared to the new ones is a lesson in itself.

- Saying goodbye to our borrowed instruments brings up the issue of where these instruments come from and how their community raises the money to purchase them.

Nicole Sumner teaches in the San Francisco Public School District as well as The Laurel School, the Community Music Center, and St. Joseph's Family Shelter.