

LISTENING ACTIVITIES

[After writing the following about listening activities, I found that I had intended to call these literature rather than listening. I will have to adapt, going one way or another. I could argue for either way. The purpose is listening, the content is literature. Perhaps that is the way to handle it. I rather like that. I think I need to differentiate perhaps between music as a skill and music as a literature. Folk songs are strictly literature. Tonality/meter stuff is skill. Recordings are both. Art songs are both. Have to make some kind of distinction between activity for saturation and that for literature, so teachers don't think play parties teach skill.]

Maybe there needs to be two different categories--listening and literature, with the distinction made very clear. The listening room activity, both recording and song or chant, and the recorder/drum, and the art songs are really listening activities, whereas the corner is literature. Art songs and recordings can be literature, but the idea is to expose them to listening through literature. Again, listening is the skill, literature the content, though content itself has value. This might be tied to whole language real literature, but much distinction has to be made for the Orffies. So, at this point, I don't know quite which way to go, LIS or LIT. I think somehow I should go LIS and include just those dealing with literature--folk songs, recordings., but use SAT for the tonality/meter, recordings, and even art songs. I could put some art song activity in lit just for lit, or cross reference the main entry. And I could include under literature the exposure to multi-cultural music. In other words, somehow by my curriculum design, it has to be apparent to teachers that saturation is where it is at and that literature is only a prop. Maybe I ought to go into that here.]

Listening activities are designed to expose children to a great variety of musical styles from various historical periods, different kinds of ensembles, music of various cultures, a variety of tonalities and meters, and a broad range of literature. Listening should be an ongoing activity from early childhood throughout life. It submerses the child in a sea of music so that he can learn to swim. The stimulus is strictly aural, with the intended response being that of attending to the aural stimulus. The more developed the child, the more he brings to the listening experience.

It is not the sequence of listening experiences that is as critical as the techniques for capturing the child's attention. All kinds and forms of music can be used. Variety is essential. In terms of techniques, it is advisable that short segments of musical works be used, and then played again. That is, a 3 minute segment of a piece of music, repeated, will captivate most any listener. And the activity with the music ought to be listening--not trying to find the beat or even connecting with the historical considerations--just experiencing listening the piece of music. Movement response from children is acceptable, but not initiated by the teacher. The focus is on listening.

Sing We and Play It offers several tracks for listening, each of which has it's own place in the music curriculum. 1)Recordings 2)Tonalities and Meters 3)Folk Songs 4)Art Songs.

1)Instrumental recordings of the highest quality are recommended, with examples of the greatest variety of style, timbre, historical period, instrumentation. Instrumental rather than vocal music is recommended so as not to draw attention to

words rather than the music, although other languages serve as timbres rather than as language. Although children are open to most any kind of music, including contemporary music, they are most comfortable with more predictable examples. Experiences with contemporary music should be included in the program, but interspersed among experiences with traditional examples. Very young children, although compelled by most any musical example, appear somewhat frightened by the more obtuse, contemporary compositions.

2) Because tonality and meter is the focus in the development of audiation, it is this area of the listening experience that is most essential to the use of the Come Children Sing Institute curriculum. It is this aspect of listening that provides the foundation for all tonality and meter activities. It is this area that provides saturation of tonality and meter. This is the meat and potatoes of the music learning curriculum.

3) Folk songs are an essential part of music literature. Folk songs can be part of a lifetime of music learning. [Folk songs include those for just listening and singing and play parties. Although play parties involve movement, they are listed as an activity in literature.]

4) Art songs balance the folk songs in a music curriculum. Like folk songs, they provide for a lifetime of music learning. The Come Children Sing Institute Song Library provides art songs for very young children as well as for grade school children.

It is advisable that all four areas of music literature be included in lesson plans, providing a well-rounded experience for the children in music listening. The age and development of the children may adjust the focus from one to another at different times in their development, but as long as the development of audiation is going on in a sequential manner, the other listening areas can be rotated, alternated, interspersed, and used to break the intensity of tonality/meter experiences.

Props are not a part of the suggested listening activities. If children are developing audiation, they will be drawn to the listening experiences by the aural source itself. Props most often take away from the children's focus on listening.

Although exposure to a great variety of recorded orchestral music is recommended for children from birth, the more direct performance of tonality songs and meter chants is most effective in the classroom to lay the foundation for tonality and meter. Further, the direct delivery and involvement with folk songs and art songs is most effective. Once the children's musical imagination has been captured by the direct interaction with live music, they are more ready and willing to listen to recorded examples in the classroom.