

PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

Performance activities are those designed to bring together the skills developed through saturation, movement, dialogue, literature, and discrimination activities in the musical execution of quality literature. Performance activities provide the arena in which developed musicianship is applied and expressed in the choral and instrumental performance of music. It is the arena in which musical play becomes playing music. Unlike the other activity categories, in which the goal is to develop the musicianship of the individual, the focus of performance activities is on the ensemble as well as the individual musician.

Whereas the standards of musical play lie in experiencing the rich activities provided and developing at one's own pace, the standards of playing music lie in artistic standards of musicianship and developing in ensemble. As an ensemble is only as strong as its weakest link, individual skills are still a major goal of performance activities, but skills that match the standard of the ensemble. That is, the ensemble sets the pace for the development of individual performance skills.

Rather than performance activities being determined by audiation sequence, they are dependent upon the literature. This is where you use skills determined by audiation sequence in chosen literature. Activities that have been used for development up until this point frequently become techniques in performance activities (ex fancy footwork).

Now there is a matter of finesse, of actually executing the nuance of the art that has been experienced so freely up to this point. It is a matter of making deliberate, making conscious, what the children know in audiation, through performance. This is the real oral of the aural.

Performance is making aware of audiation, not through syllables and reading, but through deliberate execution. It is a matter of developing a sense of style, appropriateness of style, movement, in relation to text, in relation to line, in relation to audiation. Maybe this is where all takes off into the other areas--dynamics, style, timbre, phrasing. Performance is the area in which we make children aware of the art itself and what they already have to bring to the art. It gives rise to vocal technique, sound, breath, phrasing, but only in relation to the art that they already know through their experience in audiation. That is, it makes them aware of their own artistry in its total sense. It asks them to use the skills they have developed to better deliver and experience the art itself. The goals of performance are in bringing together tonal and rhythm, line and movement, audiation and literature. Performance activities help to get to those goals.

Each piece of literature at whatever level of development presents its own challenges. Whereas one piece will challenge students to greater use of skills with meter, another will challenge them to greater use of movement and weight. All of those things that have been played with in other activities now come into play in playing music. Now some of those activities become techniques to improve performance.

[Why is this so difficult to write about? Perhaps because it is an area that has been untapped, yet that has been developing throughout with the choruses, the bridge from the development of musicianship to performance itself. There is hardly

another term to use but performance itself. Perhaps this is part of what is unique about music as an art. Performance becomes prime. In language/literature, it is only in the theater or in poetry reading that performance takes hold.]

Maybe I need to address here that up until now, the focus has been on process. In performance, there is a standard for product. Performance activities provide the process for improving the product in the context of the development of audiation. [That's it!] Performance activities approach the product through audiation rather than through vocal technique. Performance activities tap the musicianship in the child rather than setting some external standard of vocal sound and executive technique. It draws out the musicianship the child has been developing through audiation and applies it to specific pieces of literature and/or ensemble performance. It allows the child to use the skills he has developed in the context of a group--a group standard. It brings to consciousness the fact that this thing called audiation has some universality among people, that the beat is not only within the child, but within his peers as well, and that they can work together to make it happen at the same time.

Yes, the product becomes the focus, but it is through the process of audiation. These activities provide techniques and experiences that help bring the process into the product--draw the audiation out of the child, draw the musicianship out of the child into one expressive whole, a community of artists going toward common artistic goals.

Now the child's focus turns from what is within him to what is out there--the text, the line, the melody. Now audiation is used to facilitate the song rather than the song being used to facilitate the development of audiation. [That's good} However, the literature chosen still facilitates the development of audiation, as at this point, literature and audiation go hand in hand, each strengthening the other. The more well written the piece of music, the more it has to offer the child's developing musicianship. The more the developing musicianship, the more the child has to offer the performance of the piece of music.

[Perhaps literature does turn into performance, or become entwined with performance, as that is the area where literature exposure is developing, but literature is only a part of performance, as the drum activities are a different sort. Maybe there are vocal, instrumental, and literature goals of performance.]

Expression is paramount in performance, but it is the kinds of expression already experienced, applied appropriately. That is, this piece needs heavy weight, you've experienced heavy weight, now apply it in this context.

Perhaps performance provides the context for the deliberate application of particular music skills. That is, the greater context, not just the tonality and meter, but that of the whole--style, movement, line, tonality, meter.

I think I am on to something. Performance provides the context for the application of audiation.

Maybe this is where the performing arts come in. Up until this point the curriculum is laying the foundation for the performing arts. Now it is involving the children in the performing art itself. Performance takes deliberate execution, sense

of meter, sense of tonality, movement, weight, breath, line, sense of text, expression. It is the culmination of all audiation skill.

That is important. Performance provides for the culmination of audiation skill--the coming together of all of the parts. Whereas up until now the work has been on individual skills, now the focus is on the culmination of those skills. This is where the layering takes place. Tonal on rhythm on movement on line on text. It is this layering that performance activities are all about.

The drum activities and any of the instrumental activities are a layering process--meter skill, movement skill, with the addition of drum sticks, with the addition of music to read.

All of the choral experiences are layering--get the meter, get the melody, get the text, be aware of vowel, breath, line. Now you can layer with this level piece, let's try this more difficult one. It is more demanding. Now deal with a new language, two parts, keep your skills intact with this layering experience.

So maybe performance activities are really a layering of all of the others--the skills developed through the others--putting skills together in the musical execution of literature.

The Craig's are in a process of becoming aware of the vocal technique he or is not using to deliver his audiation. When he can turn his focus to the artistry of the music, then he has to use vocal technique to deliver. Part of the challenge of performance activities is directing the children's attention to the artistry of the music--what the music needs from them. The other part of the challenge is choosing literature that meets the children's musical needs--what they need from the music.

Isn't that an exciting interaction? When the two come together, there is exciting performance.

Ain't really no props in performance activities. The props are the skills developed in all other activities. They "prop up" audiation so it can take on another layer, reaching the ultimate layer of artistic expression.

That matter of context is important in performance activities. That is what makes the difference between recorders, for example, for audiation experience and one in which the children are actually creating musically as individual or group. It is the context, somehow. The context becomes the music rather than the activity!

Hey, that's it. In the other activities, the context is the activity itself, designed to mirror music like a play mirrors life. In performance activities, the context is the music itself rather than a mirror or mock up of music. On stage, life is the play. In life, play is life. In other activities, play is the life. In performance, life is the music itself. It is not musical play, it is playing music.

Actually, performance skills are also somewhat discrimination skills, as it is focusing the discrimination toward other dimensions--style, dynamics, timbre, phrasing. Isn't that interesting? It uses the skills developed in the other dimensions to discriminate in the broader realm. It is a layering in that sense, too. Edwin, this is where you develop things in terms of style, etc. It is when the basic skills are

intact and they can begin to be layered. It is still a matter of discrimination, just discriminating new dimensions.