

**Experiencing rondo form by integrating elementary music
methodologies and theories**

by

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Abstract

Notable elementary music methodologies and theories are comprised of Kodály, Dalcroze, Orff, and Gordon. By implementing and integrating elements from these four influential methods, my lesson plan focuses on Kansas' state standards of performing, creating, and responding to music while learning about rondo form.

While my undergraduate work taught me what to teach, my graduate work at Kansas State has taught me how and why, greatly developing and evolving my teaching. Prior to my graduate classes, the curriculum I compiled was exciting and stimulating, but random. I favored certain concepts and state standards with which I was more comfortable. In my coursework, I learned how students' minds work and how to reach more of them, how to vertically align my lessons between units and multiple grade levels, and how to expand my personal comfort zone to encompass a diverse and more relevant pedagogy so each and every unique student is engaged and successful.

To demonstrate these major developments, my video teaching lesson plan centers on part of a complete unit I made for MUSIC 809 where I worked on proper sequencing of activities and lessons inspired by Kodály, Dalcroze, Orff, and Gordon. The video recording of this lesson will show the first time I tried multiple elements like whole-part-whole singing instruction and improvising a simple piano accompaniment while the students improvised an unpitched percussion section.

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Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

I believe the ultimate goal of formal education in America is to develop the whole-self and produce well-rounded individuals who will positively impact society as successful citizens. Proper schooling should equip students with advanced life skills needed to not only survive, but to thrive long after leaving the educational building. This can only occur through the implementation of intentional classroom experiences and activities, varied courses, and differentiated curriculum that is constantly changing to meet the needs of each individual student. All students deserve access to a quality formal education that will prepare them to think critically, problem solve, communicate while collaborating with others, and cultivate a student's emotional, physical, mental, social, and spiritual health.

Contrary to the popular belief that music's role in education is inferior to more "important" subjects and is more of an extracurricular activity or elective for a minor population (Hodges, 2013, p. 179-181), I believe that music is a vital core academic subject for every student. All of the above-stated formal education objectives can be fulfilled through the subject of music. Nevertheless, music has its own exclusive advantages that cannot be found in other subjects. As notable arts advocate and philosopher Elliot Eisner stated, "We can accept the plurality of effects of music education without making extra musical effects primary...If the arts have no distinctive contribution to make, why worry about the arts?" (2001, p. 20-21). I feel that while defending music's rightful place as a school subject, both academic or utilitarian qualities and aesthetic reasons are appropriate and impactful. My personal philosophy places the highest importance on "music for music's sake," but I find the way music transcends academic boundaries and increases growth in other subjects compelling as well.

There is a need in formal education to nurture a student's physical, mental and emotional health. One could argue that this should be developed at home by parental guidance, but in our modern times, I believe this is often not occurring. Life-long, healthy physical habits are taught and practiced in music classes. From learning how to maneuver the voice around shifts and breaks during pubescent mutation to the proper way to breathe while playing a wind instrument, music education positively effects student health. There is nothing more intimate and personal than a person using their body as a vocal instrument or showcasing their thoughts through a composition. Not only does music exercise the mind while learning about the theoretical and historical side of music, it can increase mental and emotional well-being too. C.A. Burmeister states it simply, "In the plainest language possible, we like music because it makes us feel good. Given proper guidance, that liking may be developed into refined aesthetic sensitivity. If the activities which foster that development continue to make us feel good, it cannot be anything but beneficial to our emotions. And if the fun in being musical is not thwarted in the process, music will have made a significant contribution to general education" (2013, p. 107).

Music education to me, is the driving force that connects us all together by helping people enrich their mind, body, and soul. Russell V. Morgan attests, "It is my personal conviction that the first purpose of music education is to enrich the lives of human beings, both as individuals and in groups" (2013, p. 105). Music can be a very social endeavor that requires students to collaborate and work toward a common goal. It increases teamwork and the ability to be a leader, but also take direction. Some of my fondest school memories was the feeling of growth and accomplishment shared with classmates after a great performance or when the ensemble finally started working as one.

Not only can music establish communication skills among people, it can make students more aware and appreciative of other's cultures. Through music, students are able to proudly share their unique heritage while also learning about other cultures that may be represented in the classroom, district, city, state, country, and the world. Teachers should expose students to each piece's historical context while learning about, listening, and performing a wide variety of genres. This should include popular music that is currently listened to by our students all the way back to the music society deemed important throughout the ages. Music education must be diverse and multicultural because music is all-encompassing, universal, and has been a part of every culture throughout time. Each individual student brings a unique set of prior knowledge and background that must be respected and nurtured. In addition to music improving a student's social well-being, their spiritual health increases when they feel aware of and connected with their self and the world. As David Elliott adds, "Entering into unfamiliar music cultures activates self-examination and the personal reconstruction of one's relationships, assumptions, and preferences. Students are obliged to confront their prejudices (musical and personal) and to face the possibility that what they may believe to be universal may not be so" (2013, p. 137).

As prioritized by the National Association for Music Educators through their current National Standards, music in schools should be comprised of creating, performing, responding, and connecting (NAfME, 2014). In addition to the emotional and social positives of music education, they complement the intellectual side which focuses on music literacy within the classroom. Gerard Knieter confirms this by saying, "Programs of music education conceived as aesthetic education stress the sensitive, intelligent, and creative development of musicality through the fundamental avenues of expression: creativity, performance, and response" (2013, p. 128). My belief is that music schooling should equip students with the knowledge and ability to

perform and interpret quality music by teaching the fundamentals of theory, aural skills, and history while encouraging creativity through improvisation and composition. Special care should be given to cultivate active listeners who respond to music in an informed way.

When music education embodies the healthy development of a student's emotional, physical, mental, social, and spiritual being, then how could it not be an essential part of formal education? My goal as a music teacher is for students to no longer need me once they leave my classroom. My hope is to teach them to be independent music performers, creators, and listeners. I wish to instill a life-long passion for music in my students and that they continue to engage in music in some form. This could range from giving them the foundation of knowledge for playing in a blues band as a hobby, to preparing another who is considering music as a career choice through the collegiate audition process. Dykema and Gehrkins summarize my thoughts, "The modern school aims to provide experiences that will carry over into adult life, and here music can be a vital influence. To be sure, most of the pupils will never become professional musicians. Our main concern is to afford the great masses of people the satisfaction of participation in music. So it is not merely public school music that we are advocating. It is education through, music at the center of human life; music that changes life; changes the child so that he still remains changed when he has become a man" (2013, p. 73).

Ever since I can remember, I have loved music and children so naturally I am drawn to a career that unites my two passions. Everything that I do in the classroom is planned, implemented, and done out of care for my students. I have great respect and empathy for the children I teach and hope to instill that same care and empathy in them for others. Music can be a great vehicle and tool for teaching love and humanness. A lot of my personal philosophy aligns with Eisner and his similar thoughts, "What music education at its best ultimately creates

between a composer, a performer, and a listener is a love affair between the individual and the music. Love, after all, is not a shabby aim when it comes to the aims of education” (1996, p. 14). He goes further by saying, “Music is about the experience that moves us, that somehow reaches the deepest part of our interior world, that part in which the human spirit resides” (2001, p. 23).

I also identify with Philosopher Bennett Reimer in the regard that my view on music education is more synergistic or cooperative than others may claim like David Elliot who is a praxial formalist. As is the case with any stance, and the importance of music and how best to teach it is no exception to controversy, there are extremists on either side. My personal convictions fall in the middle where we can appreciate both the process and the product and that music is multidimensional. Reimer declares, “That is why I believe it is often possible to find a synergistic accommodation, giving due recognition to aspects called to attention by those who put extreme emphasis on them, but conceiving other balances that are more flexible and more appreciate of the contributions of factors not necessarily in opposition. In this case, viewing form and action as compatible—even as codependent—rather than contradictory, allows one to give appropriate attention to both, sometimes focusing on one, sometimes on the other, and often focusing on their necessary interrelationship” (2003, p. 50).

In conclusion, music education is vital to developing well-rounded individuals’ mind, body, and souls and thus deserves to be a permanent subject in general education. As Albert Mitchell says, “The school’s job, was not to fit the pupil into a musical life, but to fit music into the life of the pupil” (Mark & Gary, 2007, p. 457). Music develops the whole-human by cultivating individuality through creativity, nurturing cultural awareness, developing societal aspects through empathetic relationships and positive communication, increasing self-knowledge, and fostering emotional intelligence. Through creating, performing, and responding

to music, students will ideally become life-long music learners and makers. I know every aspect of my entire life has been positively shaped by the power of music and I firmly believe that all students can and should be given the opportunity to learn music in school.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

My personal philosophy is reflected in the described lesson through various facets that help develop the whole-human and lifelong music lover. By sharing the historical and cultural context of the folk song while having them connect to it by role-playing, students become more aware and empathetic of others. Creativity is encouraged through improvisation, imaginative play, and student-created actions. Relationship and communication skills are strengthened during set and improvised body percussion and unpitched percussion partner collaboration. Nurturing a positive learning environment with teacher-modeled listening and intentional music literacy activities, students will confidently improve their self-expression through performing, creating, and responding to music. The chosen rondo folk song naturally lends itself to being repeated and built upon outside of class alone or with others so students can continue to make music long after they leave my classroom.

Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan

In my graduate coursework, I learned how to structure meaningful lessons utilizing elements from four prominent elementary music education methodologies— Kodály, Dalcroze, Orff, and Gordon. By implementing and integrating features from these influential methods, my lesson plan focused on Kansas' state standards of performing, creating, and responding to music while learning about rondo form. To do this, I shared the historical context of a folk song and asked students to access their imagination. I tried whole-part-whole singing instruction for the first time to teach the melody and lyrics. I encouraged students to create actions and then modeled partner body percussion. My class experienced music first, and labeled the concept later which was new for me. Finally, I did a simple impromptu piano accompaniment while students improvised an unpitched percussion section.

I chose rondo form because the varying sections offer many opportunities for student creativity, such as improvising. Improvisation, imaginative play, movement, and composition are key components for all four methods and ones I often leave out due to lack of time, the possibility of a more chaotic learning environment, and they are out of my personal comfort zone. I decided to share this lesson because it challenged me as an educator. Not only had I never taught this lesson plan before, but I tried multiple new methods.

Experiencing Rondo Form

2014 Music Standards Addressed (NAfME, 2014)

1. MU:Cr1.1.5a Improvise rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic ideas, and explain connection to specific purpose and context (such as social, cultural, and historical).
2. MU:Pr4.2.5a Demonstrate understanding of the structure and the elements of music (such as rhythm, pitch, form, and harmony) in music selected for performance.

3. MU:Pr4.2.5b When analyzing selected music, read and perform using standard notation
4. MU:Pr4.2.5c Explain how context (such as social, cultural, and historical) informs performances.
5. MU:Pr6.1.5a Perform music, alone or with others, with expression, technical accuracy, and appropriate interpretation.

Materials of Instruction

1. Smart Board
2. Teacher laptop
3. Rhythm Sticks
4. Colored letter posters and magnets to display the form on the whiteboard
5. I've Been to Harlem/Turn the Glasses Over sheet music and activity inspiration (Row, 2015)

Objectives

1. Students will connect on a deeper level to a new folk song by acting out the storyline and learning the historical origin of the piece.
2. Students will learn about and be able to visually and aurally recognize rondo (ABACA...) form components.
3. Students will learn to sing and add student-created actions to the A and C sections.
4. Students will use body percussion and unpitched rhythm sticks with partners for the B section.
5. Students will create and/or improvise a contrasting D section.

Pre-Lesson

1. Download, print, cut, laminate, and apply magnets to form letter posters.
2. Hook up laptop to Smart Board and open Turn the Glasses Over sheet music file visual aid.
3. Place two rhythm sticks under each student chair and two on teacher music stand.

Lesson Sequence

1. Introduce today's rondo form exploration with a brief warm-up where you ask students to pretend to be a farmer or think of an actual memory since some already live on a farm. Tell them it is over a hundred years ago before air-conditioning closed cab tractors and it is boiling hot out. You are sweaty, dirty, stinky, and have been working dawn to dusk for months to plant, nurture, and harvest crops to make a living to feed your family. Allow students to move around and pretend to plant seed, hoe weeds, wipe their brow, etc. to get into character. Ask them to stop and share what the first thing they'd do when they finished harvest for the season; answers may include: have a party, dance, cook and eat food, drink a cold beverage, jump in the pond, and more. Inform the students that today's rondo song is an old folk harvest song from 1906 in a book written by Nathaniel Paine Blaker called *I've Been to Harlem/Turn the Glasses Over* (Row, 2015). The folk song is all about celebrating with friends and family the end of the crop season with eating and drinking yummy stuff.
2. Begin teaching the song with a whole-part-whole method. Do this by first the teacher singing the whole 8 measures of the A section while the students listen, then chunk a smaller section of the first 4 measures and have the students echo-sing it back, next teacher sings the last 4 measures while the students echo, and finally sing the whole 8 measure phrase together. Do this a few times and walk around listening until all

- students are singing every word, pitch, and rhythm correctly. Set time aside for students to create and agree on actions as a class that match the text.
3. Invite students to label the first section we just learned with a letter-A. Place the A poster on the board.
 4. Move on to the next section by having a student come up to be the teacher's partner and have the others turn to their shoulder partner. Model the simple body percussion pattern-clap, right hands together, clap, left hands together, clap, clap, both hands together, both hands together. Practice until students master the body percussion B section. Add rhythm sticks (tap them together instead of hands) to keep the attention of 5th grade students. Practice again. Put a B up on the board to continue the form.
 5. Follow step 3, but introduce the 8 measures of the final C section.
 6. Invite students to label the newest section we just learned with a letter-C. Place the C poster on the board.
 7. After informally assessing through observation that students had fully gasped all three sections, put the pieces together and perform a rondo ABACA.
 8. Finally, let students improvise a D section with rhythm sticks, square or swing dancing, or any other idea they come up with while the teacher plays a simple accompaniment. Put it into the rondo form ABACADA and perform it all together.

Integration of Methods

A combination of distinguished elementary music education methodologies was cohesively incorporated into this lesson. A teaching method or theory is strategies or pedagogy used to successfully teach subject matter in a classroom setting. Although Kodály, Dalcroze, Orff, and Gordon all have unique aspects that set them apart from one another, this lesson uses

specific strategies hand-picked from each one to best teach rondo form. I feel this is important because by themselves, not one seemed like a perfect fit for my teaching style, but a combination of the four complemented my personality and group of students. I have chosen to integrate the methods this way because the methods complement each other with many of the ideas being similar and not mutually exclusive. In addition, my goal was to push myself by trying unfamiliar approaches and delivery styles.

A large emphasis of this lesson is placed on experiencing movement, storytelling, and play which represents Dalcroze Eurhythmics and Orff methodologies. The use of whole-part-whole teaching when learning the singing sections is contributed to both Gordon's Music Learning Theory and Orff Schulwerk. The way the poem was taught to the class followed the Orff teaching process by beginning with speech, adding body percussion, and moving to unpitched percussion instruments. *Turn the Glasses Over* (Row, 2015) is a folk song from the Orff Level 1 training. Finally, learn by rote first, label concept later is found in all four methods.

Lesson Plan Reflection

My goals for this lesson are stated in the objectives for the lesson plan above. I hoped that students would connect to a folk song by learning context through role-playing and sharing the history. I wanted students to access prior knowledge of form (binary and ternary) so they had a framework when adding this lesson's rondo form components. I feel that it is critical to scaffold new information onto a foundation of already learned knowledge. My students understanding of binary and ternary form was solid, but I found I had neglected to teach rondo form. Finally, I strove for students to fully experience rondo form through singing, moving (student-created actions, body percussion, and unpitched percussion instruments), and creating (improvising).

From a teacher perspective, my personal goal was to try a new lesson utilizing unfamiliar methodologies (Kodály, Dalcroze, Orff, and Gordon). This was a significant goal for me because I am always looking to expand my skills and grow as an educator. I feel that a teacher who never tries anything new or challenging will grow stagnant, and that is the last thing I want for myself or my students.

My students learned not just the textbook definition of rondo form, but they experienced it. By enveloping them in the learning process, my hope is they will remember the concept long after they leave my room. “When students encounter music, it is experienced with more meaning” (Lange, 2005). In my personal experience, the activities and concepts I remember vividly from elementary music class all involved being out of my chair moving or doing something hands-on. Each section of the rondo had a different purpose consisting of singing the folk melody with student-created actions, playing a rhythmic pattern with a partner, singing a contrasting counter-melody while tapping the macro and micro beat, and improvising with rhythm sticks individually or with a partner. I employed instructional strategies including role-play to engage them at the beginning, lecture to share the context of the folk song, modeling when I taught the body percussion, and peer collaboration during the partner sections. I used minor technology (laptop, Smart Board, PowerPoint slide) to display the song title and sheet music the second day to catch up previously absent students.

I used a performance assessment to evaluate my objectives being met. I visually and aurally observed each student in an informal group setting by looking, listening, and walking around throughout. I also had students do a self-assessment using their thumbs to gauge how they felt they were doing, since kids are usually brutally honest. In the future, I might add a formal summative assessment at the end of the lesson to tangibly check student understanding of

the rondo form. Moving forward, I would include more time spent on the minimal improvisation portion since class time felt rushed and ran out quickly. I would also like to add more Dalcroze Eurythmics (Mead, 1994) to my teaching because I believe it is natural for children to move and internalize pitch and rhythm. Eurythmics can be a great tool to physically and mentally understand music. I plan to allow students opportunities to freely and instinctively move to music instead of always providing structured teacher-led movement. By moving to a rondo form, students would be able to feel the difference of each individual section long before they could label it.

This instruction has enhanced my teaching because I put to practice an actual lesson plan from a comprehensive unit I wrote for MUSIC 809. It is one thing to check all the boxes while creating fictional curriculum for a class assignment, but the skills I have learned through graduate school not only work, but excel in a real classroom setting. I have learned how to skillfully combine major elementary music methodologies so that they fit my teaching style and my classroom environment. I have learned to embrace the storytelling/play element of Dalcroze and Orff that I had been ignoring since teaching upper elementary age. I used to do it all the time when teaching younger students, but this instruction showed me that older children still yearn for imaginative play.

This process has also opened me up to learning by rote first, labeling the concept later idea that is found in all four methods. “Students build a solid foundation of aural and performing skills through singing, rhythmic movement, and tonal and rhythm pattern instruction before being introduced to notation and music theory” (The Gordon Institute for Music Learning, 2020). I have always liked to start class by announcing the theme or concept we were learning that day because that is how my structured brain is wired, but I see the value in experiencing it first.

Although I did not get to develop and spend as much time as I would like on the improvisation activity, this instruction showed me that the kids greatly enjoyed that creative aspect and it is very doable to add improvisation in my daily lessons.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

I focused on what to teach during my undergraduate and first few years of teaching; now I better understand how to teach effectively and why, so I can reach every student in my future classrooms. Exploring theories of music teaching and drafting my personal learning theory opened my eyes to the way people think. My biggest takeaway has been that every single person has a different reality based on their environment and background. It is easy to forget as a teacher that what I think is right or wrong may very well be completely different to someone else, and students are not choosing to be “bad,” they just see things differently. Understanding the varying viewpoints greatly influenced my classroom management in my middle school grade levels. I now have more empathy, patience, and a willingness to understand a person’s actions before disciplining. This is critical for establishing a safe learning environment and building positive teacher/student relationships.

I have gained skill sets including the ability to lesson plan better and find answers when I have questions. I plan more innovative short-term and long-term activities, lessons, and units by focusing on developing curriculum. Prior to graduate school, I would randomly find ideas online, in books, at conferences, or by talking to colleagues. These were all great resources, but my curriculum felt disjointed and hard to vertically align the National standards throughout my grade levels. Since then, I have a greater understanding of how to pace and organize, in addition to becoming more familiar with the current 2014 standards (NAfME, 2014) since my undergrad focused on the 1994 National Standards (NAfME, 1994). Also, there are many times I have a question or want to know more about a topic. Currently, I know where to start researching to find out more from other scholars or how to design my own study. Because I am aware of the reputable resources available (articles, journals, dissertations, databases, etc.), I find myself

encouraging kids to critically think by asking hard questions so we can find the answer or more information. Research is not as scary as I thought it once was, and that is empowering.

A class that has been monumental in changing my teaching is Symposium in Music-Little Kid's Rock Modern Band. I was very moved not only by the engaging delivery of the topic, but by the actual content as well. I was inspired to step out of my comfort zone and fundraise enough money for a classroom set of ukuleles, cases, and tuners. I went from a person who had never played this instrument before to someone who felt comfortable teaching multiple grade levels ukulele. Instant student success and approximation revolutionized my teaching style. Prior to this course I was guilty of the traditional way of introducing and teaching of an instrument (for example: first day is spent labeling the parts of the recorder or repeatedly playing a phrase as many times as it takes until they play it correctly). This was inadvertently causing kids to be uncomfortable and/or lose interest.

I have also adopted Little Kid's Rock's "Music as a Second Language" approach. "The ideas of fostering low-anxiety environments, using a student-centered repertoire, leveraging intrinsic motivation, employing comprehensible input, the early introduction of improvisation and composition...are some of the special features of the Music as a Second Language approach" (Wish, 2020). One way I have stayed student-centered and culturally relevant is by allowing students to choose the majority of the repertoire we play from YouTube or the Little Kid's Rock website because they provide diverse popular music.

My undergraduate was several years ago and only briefly summarized Orff and Kodály. Now, I have had impactful in-depth learning about the four major elementary music methodologies. Orff Schulwerk, Gordon's Music Learning Theory, Dalcroze Eurhythmics, and the Kodály Approach have all shown me my lessons should focus on high-quality musical

literacy, movement, creativity, appreciation, and experience before labeling. My classroom has transformed from less lecturing to more rich, hands-on experiences. I have seen a positive change in student engagement, behavior, and comprehension. I have an eclectic teaching style and it has been fun piecing together parts from all four methods to form my new teaching approach.

Carl Orff's Schulwerk (Lange, 2005) includes important takeaways such as carefully-planned storytelling/play activities and thought-provoking questions to inspire natural creative thinking. A major component of the Orff method is discovery learning through a variety of vehicles: speech, song, movement, and instruments. My current classroom lacks pitched bar and unpitched percussion instruments, but I have done my best to use recorders, rhythm sticks, and body percussion to fill that gap when teaching an Orff style activity or lesson. I have attempted to add more improvisation with helpful parameters not only on instruments, but with our voices and body movement. It has been satisfying seeing students' creativity and confidence flourish.

While I do not subscribe to everything that Edwin Gordon's Music Learning Theory (Lange, 2005) represents, it has challenged my teaching philosophy and helped me realize what I believe. I now do more with tonic/resting pitch, unusual meters, rote teaching, variety of tonalities, and introducing tonic and dominant over the melody. Gordon's Music Learning Theory has also impacted my vocabulary that I use while teaching. Prior to Symposium in Music-MLT with Jennifer Bailey, not only did I scarcely teach macro and micro beats or audiation, but I never labeled these concepts with my students. I am trying to do better incorporating the concepts and the terminology by verbalizing out loud when we move to macro and micro beats and visually demonstrating audiation by tapping my temple.

I love the emphasis Dalcroze places on students internalizing the music with their bodies. My pedagogy has developed by adding in Emile Jacques-Dalcroze Eurhythmics (Mead, 1994) in little ways like walking/hopping/skipping to show different note durations or using props to showcase a concept. Although this method is difficult for me since I am not strong at improvising or playing an instrument, my goal is to continue adding more and more conscientious movement so not only my students get better at using their body as an instrument, but I will too.

Many of Zoltan Kodály's aural and visual practices I already incorporate in my teaching like rhythm syllables, hand signs, and solfege, but graduate school has reminded me how useful and fundamental they are. In addition, the Kodály Approach (Mason, 2012) has motivated me to use folk songs and include their historical context as much as possible. Having limited piano skills and classroom instrument resources has always felt like a disadvantage, but Kodály has transformed my thought process that one must have those to thrive in a music setting. The use of singing as the principal vehicle makes it possible for me to use this method in any situation.

I am so thankful for the elementary music education I have gained from the summers spent in Kansas State University's graduate program. Every class that I have taken has positively impacted me in some way and has greatly influenced my teaching. I am excited to continue to use and grow this knowledge in my future classrooms.

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