

The applied music lesson: Teaching gifted and talented students utilising principles of comprehensive musicianship

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Comprehensive musicianship is a term used to describe the intradisciplinary study of music. The comprehensive musicianship approach is closely related to Gestalt psychology in that music is approached as a totality, with a concern for constituent parts and how they relate to the whole (Willoughby, 1971). The concept of integration is central to the philosophy of comprehensive musicianship. By relating and integrating the various areas of music, integration allows for a logical and meaningful learning experience. The comprehensive musicianship approach brings balance and focus to the disparate areas of music, allowing students to pursue and explore all aspects of music and their interrelationships (Willoughby, 1971). The intent of the comprehensive musicianship approach is to integrate and synthesise all areas of music including music history, music literature, music theory, performance and pedagogy into a unified whole (Spearman, 1979; MENC, 1965).

Music, comprehensive musicianship, integration, performance, gifted

INTRODUCTION

In a traditional music curriculum, various courses such as music theory, music history, music literature and performance are usually studied as separate and distinct areas of music. Because these various courses are taught separately and often by different instructors, the integration of knowledge from one course to another is rare. This is especially true in the area of applied instruction in which the relationship of the music literature studied is seldom related to the theoretical systems, historical and stylistic periods from which the literature was composed. Often, students perform literature without an understanding of the historical and theoretical aspects that served as guidelines in the compositional process. Therefore, students have a fragmented knowledge of music that prevents them from developing a comprehensive musical understanding (Mark, 1986).

Incorporating Comprehensive Musicianship into the Applied Lesson

Most students do not have the time, financial means, opportunity or desire to study the various areas of music separately. Many times the applied lesson is the student's only opportunity to gain musical knowledge. The applied music instructor should not only strive to teach the student performance skills, but should also educate the student in all aspects of music. The musical composition being studied by the student becomes the nucleus for all the disparate areas of music to be integrated in to the applied lesson. At the same time students are learning the skills necessary to perform the musical composition, they are also gaining knowledge in a variety of other musical areas such as music theory, history, literature and style.

The comprehensive musicianship approach should ideally be used to teach all applied music students but it is especially beneficial to gifted and talented students who have the ability to master various musical skills and concepts at a fast pace. By integrating the various areas of music into the applied lesson, gifted and talented students will not only gain performance skills but also acquire knowledge that allows them to become well-rounded accomplished musicians.

The researcher developed a theoretical comprehensive musicianship curriculum model that outlines the musical knowledge and skills to be integrated into the applied music lesson. The model was constructed based upon findings from (a) studies that resulted in a comprehensive musicianship curriculum for various grade levels and (b) other literature pertaining to comprehensive musicianship. In addition to a thorough review of related literature in the development of the theoretical comprehensive musicianship model, the model was also examined by music educators experienced in the comprehensive musicianship approach. The theoretical comprehensive musicianship curriculum model, along with a cover letter describing the study, was sent to music educators who are experts in the field of comprehensive musicianship. These music educators examined the model for deficiencies, suggested revisions and the model was revised accordingly. The model consists of five categories: concepts, content, activities, instructional literature and evaluation. These categories address the development of musical skills and knowledge advocated by the comprehensive musicianship approach. An explanation of each follows.

Concepts

The theoretical comprehensive musicianship curriculum model includes the development of musical skills and knowledge through the study of seven common elements of music: timbre, rhythm, harmony, form, melody, tonality and texture (Colwell, 1992; Ernst, 1974; Lawler, 1976). When teaching an applied lesson, the music instructor should strive to incorporate these concepts into the lesson using a spiral approach. The spiral approach advocates that a concept be introduced first on a simple level, and then revisited on a more complex level each time the student studies a new piece of music. Individual concepts may receive more or less attention due to the nature of the particular piece being performed but over a period of time, the student will gain a mastery over these concepts as each is introduced and revisited on a more sophisticated level.

Content

The comprehensive musicianship approach stresses the development of musical skills and knowledge in the following nine content areas: music theory, music history, music literature/style, ear training, compositional techniques, improvisational techniques performance practices, conducting practices, and music aesthetics. A primary area in the comprehensive musicianship approach is music theory. A comprehensive musicianship curriculum advocates the development of knowledge concerning the structural elements of music, musical form and compositional techniques used in the creation of music (Ernst, 1974; Garofalo, 1983; Lawler, 1976; MENC, 1965; Warner, 1990).

Other areas in the theoretical comprehensive musicianship curriculum model are music history, music literature and style. The comprehensive musicianship approach develops students' interpretive and stylistic skills in musical performance through knowledge of music history and music literature. Comprehensive musicianship stresses the integration of music history to enhance performance and listening skills in addition to merely gaining historical facts and information (Colwell, 1992; Ernst, 1974; Lawler, 1976; MENC, 1965; Warner, 1990).

A comprehensive musicianship curriculum also develops students' ear-training skills. The ability to identify the various structural elements of music, music forms, intervals, chord progressions,

recognition of various instruments and the development of internal hearing are goals of a comprehensive musicianship curriculum (Lawler, 1976; MENC, 1965; Warner, 1990).

Other areas of a comprehensive musicianship curriculum are compositional techniques, improvisational techniques, performance and conducting practices. The teaching of these content areas is important in the comprehensive musicianship approach (Ernst, 1974; Heisinger, 1973; Lawler, 1976; MENC, 1965; Warner, 1990).

The last musical area included in the content category of the theoretical comprehensive musicianship curriculum model is music aesthetics. Aesthetic education is the development of human sensitivity to the expressive qualities of the arts. The comprehensive musicianship approach contains the necessary components to develop students' aesthetic sensitivity to music. The goal of comprehensive musicianship is for all students to have a knowledge and understanding of the music that will enable them to:

- (1) judge music with discriminating taste,
 - (2) have knowledge of and tolerance towards various musical styles,
 - (3) develop an appreciation for quality music and
 - (4) develop an appreciation of compositional and performing skills
- (Ernst, 1974; Lawler, 1976; Willoughby, 1971).

The theoretical comprehensive musicianship curriculum model advocates the teaching of the nine previously listed musical areas in an integrated manner. The comprehensive musicianship approach requires the integration and synthesis of music study. Compartmentalisation of the various musical areas is to be avoided. This integration allows the student to perceive music in its totality and for synthesis of conceptual knowledge and skills from the various areas of music to take place (Heisinger, 1973; Lawler, 1976; MENC, 1965).

Activities

The goal of comprehensive musicianship is to develop a total understanding and competency of all areas of music through the integration of the following activities: performing, creating, conducting, analytical listening and discussing. Comprehensive musicianship stresses student involvement in all areas (Colwell, 1992; Ernst, 1974; Heisinger, 1973; Lawler, 1976; MENC, 1965; Willoughby, 1971).

As students gain proficiency on a musical instrument or voice, they are given an opportunity to experience the art of music through performance. As students assume the role of composer and conductor, they become more independent, making choices, taking risks and using intuition and imagination. Through analytical listening and discussion, students gain insight into the structure of the music through the comprehension of interrelationships and organisation of the piece. Students develop discriminatory listening habits and the ability to communicate what is heard through the use of a musical vocabulary. Through these five activities, performing, creating, conducting, analytical listening and discussing, the comprehensive musicianship approach allows the student to relate musical concepts and skills in one area to that of another through interaction and continuity of experiences (Heisinger, 1973; Lawler, 1976; Willoughby, 1971).

Instructional Literature

Another category addressed by the theoretical comprehensive musicianship curriculum model is the inclusion of a variety of western and non-western music incorporating various periods and styles. The comprehensive musicianship approach encourages the study and utilisation of a wide variety of music literature; both western and non-western, from various periods and styles,

including music from the twentieth century (Ernst, 1974; Heisinger, 1973; Lawler, 1976; Warner, 1990; Willoughby, 1971).

Evaluation

The last category addressed by the theoretical comprehensive musicianship curriculum model is evaluation. The comprehensive musicianship approach includes assessment in the areas of descriptive competence, performance competence, creative competence and attitude (MENC, 1968).

THEORETICAL COMPREHENSIVE MUSICIANSHIP CURRICULUM MODEL

The intent of the comprehensive musicianship approach is to integrate and synthesise all areas of music into a unified whole. The theoretical comprehensive musicianship curriculum model presented in Table 1 organises and outlines the various areas of music allowing them to be integrated into the applied music lesson.

Table 1. The theoretical comprehensive musicianship curriculum model

CONCEPTS	CONTENT	ACTIVITIES	INSTRUCTIONAL LITERATURE			EVALUATION
			Western Art	Western	Eastern/African	
Timbre	Music Theory	Performing	20th Century	Folk	Folk	Descriptive
Rhythm	Music History	Creating	Romantic	Traditional	Traditional	Performing
Harmony	Music Lit and Style	Conducting	Classic	Sacred/Spiritual	Sacred/Spiritual	Creative
Form	Ear Training	Analytical Listening	Baroque	Pop		Attitude
Melody	Compositional Techniques	Discussing	Renaissance	Rock		
Tonality	Improvisational Techniques		Medieval	Jazz		
Texture	Performance Practices					
	Conducting Practices					
	Music Aesthetics					

Developing a Lesson Plan

In order to incorporate principles of comprehensive musicianship into the applied lesson, the music instructor will need to create a pre-lesson plan that contains all the information to be presented to the student. This pre-lesson plan should contain (1) historical notes about the composition, composer, musical period in which the piece was written as well as available recordings and (2) an analysis of the piece examining the following seven elements of music: timbre, rhythm, harmony, form, melody, tonality and texture.

The applied music instructor should then develop a lesson plan writing instructional objectives for teaching as many of the seven musical elements listed above as possible. Content areas used for teaching these elements should include as many of the following nine content areas as possible: music theory, music history, music literature and style, ear training, compositional techniques, improvisational techniques, performance practices, conducting practices and music aesthetics.

Activities used by the music instructor to teach these objectives should include performing, creating, conducting, analytical listening and discussing. When choosing literature for performance, selections should come from at least three different categories of Western Art, Western and Eastern or African music.

Evaluation techniques utilised by the music instructor should include descriptive (written), performance (playing), and creative (composition or arranging) tests. A survey of attitude should also be done to find out the student's interests and feelings about the lesson.

SUMMARY

For many students, the applied lesson is the only music class they will take. By incorporating principles of comprehensive musicianship into the applied lesson, music students will not only learn performance skills but will also music theory, music history, music literature and style along with the other various areas of music. Students will develop a comprehensive musical knowledge that will allow them to be better performers and increase their appreciation and enjoyment of all music as they become well-educated patrons of the arts.

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