

Senior Project Proposal

Folk Music Class

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Project Summary

I intend to create an after school folk music class for Smithville and Dannon Junior High students. The class will be held once a week at each school. We will be discussing and playing different folk music from around the world. Students will have the opportunity to perform at a concert in the spring to demonstrate what they learned.

I. General Issue

A major component of the music education program is to develop skills that enable future music teachers to teach effectively. One of the most important ways to develop these skills is to obtain teaching experience. As a music teacher, we must incorporate the music core curriculum into our classes. There are some standards of the Utah State Music Core Curriculum that are often overlooked in a music class. These standards relate to students learning “to play a simple folk song by ear,” and how to “improvise simple melodies and rhythms.” Micah Volz (2005) says, “Giving students time to explore the sounds they can make with their instruments and voices is the first step to helping them become successful improvisers.” Also, according to the core, students should “compare and contrast styles from a variety of cultures,” and “perform and enjoy music related to various cultures.” Many young musicians do not get the opportunity to specifically explore and perform folk music from other cultures. They are bound by classical roots because this is the norm of an orchestra musician.

Teachers have emphasized the importance of folk music in music education. “Most students may not plan to be classical performing artists. To study fiddling may instill a respect for fiddling style, increase understanding and encourage a

playing velocity often sought by string players.” (Gordy, 2005) There are many young musicians who begin to study strings in order to play music other than classical, but do not have the opportunity to explore this facet of music in their education. “Do we realize how many students have an appetite for styles outside the classical curriculum? Are we willing to open up traditional teaching practices to embrace the musical imagination of the world?” (Lieberman, 2004) In a study done by Marilyn Ward (2004), she discovered that many of her students did not know basic children folk songs. She said, “If a generation of teachers rises up who do not know the songs of their American heritage, they will not teach them to their students. Our nation could lose its heritage very quickly.” Lieberman (2004) also expresses her concern. She says, “As educators, I maintain that we have a slightly different responsibility. We must do the best we can to respect each genre, explore its roots, and present that information to our students as we teach them the tunes of various traditions and cultures.”

II. Objectives

I intend to create a semester long program for junior high string students. This program will expose students to folk songs from around the world, and develop improvisation skills. The principle focus of this program will be to expose students to a broader range of music. It will also help them develop and expand their musical ability. Through this, I hope to gain more experience, and develop my skills as a music teacher.

III. Plan

I plan to sign students up from Smithville and Dannon Junior High School. I intend to spend one day a week at each Junior High for an hour after school teaching

different aspects of folk music. Prior permission has been obtained to use the music classrooms at each school from the principals. My goal is to make this program accessible to all students interested in attending. Enrollment in the class is not restricted. Everyone is invited to participate, however, they must be willing to learn and practice the material we study in class. Since we only meet once a week, practicing will be very important.

In addition to the principals' support for this program, the orchestra teacher at Dannon and Smithville, Richard Krandall, is willing to encourage his students to attend. I have surveyed the students' willingness to participate, and I anticipate 15-25 students from each school to attend.

The music that will be played is a compilation of folk songs from different cultures around the world that include American and Chinese. This curriculum offers a wide variety of different sounds, rhythms, and improvisational opportunities for the students to experiment with.

Toward the end of the semester, the students in this program will have the opportunity to perform some of the folk songs learned in a concert that will be held in conjunction with their regular school orchestra. This concert will give me a good opportunity to evaluate the students' progress through the course.

IV. Timeline

November - First of January

1. Sign students up for class.
2. Select literature for the course.

January

1. Explore American and European Folk Music with students.
2. Discuss improvisation.

February

1. Explore Middle East and Asian Folk Music with students.
2. Discuss culture and how it relates to traditional music.

March

1. Select concert repertoire.
2. Rehearse concert with students.

V. Teaching Material

I have collected the following books and recordings that I will be using during the course of the folk music class.

Ad Hoc Taraf of Clejani. (1988). *Musique des tsiganes de valachi*.

Paris: Harmonia Mundi France.

Bosnian Muslims. (1993). *Bosnia: echoes from an endangered world*.

Washington D.C.: Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings.

Dabczynski, A.H., & Phillips, B. *Fiddlers philharmonic: Traditional fiddling in the string orchestra*. California: Alfred Publishing Co.

Fiddlesticks. (1999). *FiddleSticks playing favorites*. Utah: Rosewood Recording.

Gemini. (1986). *Changing directions 1*. Michigan: The High/Scope Press.

Gemini. (1986). *Changing directions 2*. Michigan: The High/Scope Press.

Gemini. (1986). *Changing directions 3*. Michigan: The High/Scope Press.

Ichikawa, K., & Nakagawa, K.(1990). *Video anthology of world music & dance: east asia 5*. Cambridge, MA: Rounder Records.

King Singers. (1985). *Watching the white wheat: folk songs of british isles*.

England: EMI Records LTD.

Li, X.S. (2002). *Collection of world music book two*. Taiwan: Taizhong Printing.

Lieberman, J.L. (2004). *Alternative strings the new curriculum*.

New Jersey: Amadeus Press.

MENC. (1998). *Music resources for multicultural perspectives 2nd edition*.

Virginia: MENC.

Odessa Balalaikas. (1992). *The art of the balalaika*. Los Angeles:

Elektra/Asylum/Nonesuch Records

Tuva. (1990). *Tuva: voices from the center of Asia*. Washington D.C.:

Smithsonian/Folkways Records.

Various Artists. (2004). Lullabies from the axis of evil. New York: Valley Entertainment.

Volz, M.D. (2005). Improvisation begins with exploration. *Music Educators Journal*. 92:1: 50-53.

VI. Evaluation

During the course of my project, I will be keeping a reflective journal. This will document what goes on in the folk music class and my reflections on that day's activities. I also will have lesson plans that provide detailed objectives and activities. I will submit both the reflective journal and lesson plans to the committee at the conclusion of my project.

References

Gordy, K. T. (2005). Fitting in fiddling. *Teaching Music*. 13:2: 54-58.

Lieberman, J.L. (2004). *Alternative strings the new curriculum*. New Jersey: Amadeus Press.

Utah State of Education. (2005). Orchestra I core curriculum. Retrieved December 1, 2005, from http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/FineArt/Core_curriculum/music/Music_Sec.htm#orchI

Ward, M. (2004). How well do children know the folk songs of their American heritage? *Teaching Music*. 11:4: 64-65.

Volz, M.D. (2005). Improvisation begins with exploration. *Music Educators Journal*. 92:1: 50-53.

The signatures below indicate the music education candidate's senior project proposal has been approved and may proceed following the guidelines above

Thomas Priest (Chair)

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