

PROCESS AS CONTENT IN ORFF-SCHULWERK

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This article is concerned with the difference between knowing something and knowing what to do with it!

In curriculum circles, over the past many years, there has been a pair of contrasting viewpoints which have been extremely controversial. These center around the relative importance of content and process in education. Orff-Schulwerk is a prime example of a focus on process rather than on content.

During the course of this presentation I'm first going to take a look at content versus process; second, build a case for the use of process-oriented educational techniques; third, go a step further and propose that process could quite conceivably and validly be the highest form of content; fourth, indicate that the main thrust in Orff-Schulwerk is in the area of process; and finally, give examples of processes which need to be developed for efficient education in music as a personal, expressive, and communicative art, especially as used in Orff-Schulwerk.

Let's take a look at these terms. First *content*: according to the curriculum specialists, content comprises the vast array of available facts, concepts, generalizations that make up the learning material of the course or the subject. Take a look at most music methods textbooks, at teachers' editions of music series, at promotional material. What is most often focused on? *Things to learn*—songs to know, pieces to recognize, concepts covered in each grade—this information in this grade, this scale series and these chord progressions in this grade: these key signatures or modes not until this particular time; knowing these symbols first, then these, and so on. Yes, activities are included too, like singing, playing of instruments, even dramatization and movement, but the focus is on what information is acquired, especially on its scope and sequence.

Now to *process*: As used in education, it comprises all the *operations* which can be associated with knowledge and with human activities,—that group of various procedures which surround the gaining and using of information.

All right, you say, so there's content, and there's process; we look to and use both, don't we? Again, the issue hinges on where the focus is: do we believe it's more important to develop understandings of information or understandings of processes?

Whitehead over 40 years ago talked about the "deadwood of inert knowledge" in his *The Aims of Education*. He says, "Education is the acquisition of the *art* of the *utilization* of knowledge." His emphasis is clearly on *utilization* more strongly than on acquisition of information.

Dewey says the same thing: "Knowledge...becomes dynamic only as it is hinged to the processes which we use to relate to each other." In fact, in "*Democracy and Education*," Dewey goes further, saying that "information severed from thoughtful action is dead, a mind-crushing load..., it is a most powerful *obstacle to further growth* in the grace of intelligence".

What then, are the deepest objectives of education, even music education? Anyone who spends much deliberative time with this question cannot possibly come up with an answer which suggests that these objectives

can be achieved by looking directly to content.

I'm going to suggest not only that we should look more to process in our educational maneuverings, but that especially in Orff-Schulwerk, process is content, in fact the highest form of content. Processes are not merely vehicles to a destination, but are themselves a key destination. In Schulwerk, the very name implies the primacy of the process-orientation: *Schulwerk-Werk-work*, something to be done. One point that distinguishes Orff's *Music for Children* from music as generally conceived, is that in music it seems to be only the product that counts. In *Music for Children*, on the other hand, it is the process that is of greatest importance. Preussner says that Orff's Schulwerk "leads to the inner process of movement and music in people..." And Keller says that Elemental Music "originates and finds its fulfillment in a process that is going on now, and is not directed towards an abstract goal." And Orff himself says that the Schulwerk is "never conclusive and settled, but always developing, always growing, always flowing."

Why such an emphasis on learning of process as the key focus of any instructional strategy? For one thing, learning doesn't end when our students get out of school; hopefully it's a perpetual process. Then what will be of most value to them as they continue to learn is an ability to use the procedures necessary to the acquisition and use of new relationships they encounter throughout life. Bruner reinforces this when he says (*Process of Education*, p.6) "learning properly under optimum conditions leads one to 'learn how to learn'".

And John Gardner, in *Self-Renewal* says, "All too often we are giving our young people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own plants. We are stuffing their heads with the products of earlier innovation rather than teaching them to innovate. We think of the mind as a storehouse to be filled when we should be thinking of it as an instrument to be used."

Piaget not only contends that knowledge arises and becomes organized as the child interacts with his environment, but he further maintains that the central idea in the structure of knowledge is the operation. He says (in Almy, p. 16) "To know an object is to act on it...to know is to modify, to transform the object and to understand the process of this transformation."

When process is considered the essential curricular target, rather than information, music education will not be reduced to the bare mechanics of notation, scales and keys, harmonic structure, stories of composers, and drill. While these aspects have their own degree of importance, they will not be ends-in-themselves. The ends of music education should involve a developing sense of the miracle of musical sound-manipulation into coherent expression and communication, developing a sense for the organization of whole musical ideas into logical and intuitive structures, moving from the preoccupation with manipulating symbols to an overall procedure for guiding and fostering effective expression of ideas through music. Thus we are also focusing on the key necessity of personalized participation by the students, getting them deeply involved in the teaching-learning process. But let's go back for a minute and ask what's so terrible about focusing strongly on content? It is so often true that where primary emphasis is on content, the learner ordinarily functions passively; he submits to "authority", he doesn't select his conclusions; he doesn't try to see how new answers could work. Certainly there are processes involved; but

these are related mainly to assimilating other peoples' conclusions, and then exhibiting them.

To conclude this section, let me remind music teachers: "It is not what you tell students about music that counts, it's what you have them do with it."

It's safe to say that evidence is all around us to indicate that in our traditional school music curriculum we have been worshipping mastery of content as the prime aim in general classroom music education. It also can be said that evidence is coming in that more stress could be placed on process. And just as content can have categorical order, sequence and scope, so also process can have an underlying scheme which is there not to provide an answer, but to give directions and order for the search for answers. And if the search for answers is ever over we are dead, at least for all intents and purposes.

What kind of processes do we need to develop? Process operates in a context that certainly includes informational knowledge; but within this context are also the teacher, the children and their characteristics, and the interrelationships of all three. Process is the integrating mechanism which brings all of these together.

The most valid content is useful, can be manipulated, and has structural and functional significance, not Whitehead's "inert knowledge". And it has to prove useful as its acquisition, manufacture, and selection are guided by the teacher. Orff, Walter, and others make the strong point that Orff-Schulwerk requires creative, imaginative, teachers.

And lastly, the child's development stage has to be taken into consideration, as that great explorer of children's growth processes, Piaget, has convinced us.

Where else do we look for answers as to what processes to use in music education? Again back to Bruner. He says: "What a scientist does at his desk, or in the laboratory, what a literary critic does in reading a poem, are of the same order as what anybody else does when he is engaged in like activities—if he is to achieve understanding. The difference is in degree, not in kind. The schoolboy learning physics is a physicist, and it is easier for him to learn physics behaving like a physicist than doing something else." (*Process of Education*). To paraphrase then: it is easier to learn music through behaving like a musician than through doing something else. That means we need to look at some of the procedures of the musician. It also means that the corollary must also be true—we can't look at the procedures of the consumer of music for any help except insofar as they're "musicianlike" processes.

Perhaps a succinct way of saying what a musician does is that he looks for, discovers, and expresses his understandings of a meaningful world of sound relationships.

Now, on the basis of this, let me submit a listing of the most useful processes in music education.* You'll notice that these could be the processes used by young children as they first learn to speak or communicate through any medium; they're the processes used by the musician as he goes about making music; and they're the processes used in Orff-

*Categorization of these processes comes from *Process as Content* by J. Cecil Parker and Louis J. Rubin, Rand McNally & Co. Chicago 1966, a stimulating book which was the impetus for many of the ideas and adaptations in this article.

Schulwerk. Notice that even though they're listed separately, simultaneity will certainly be involved.

Processes are subsumed under three large categories: first, the intake-acquisition processes; next the manipulative-divergence processes; and lastly, the manipulative-synthesizing processes. Let's take a look at these areas one at a time:

The intake-acquisition processes are probably those at the most primitive level of activity. They involve the following kinds of activities:

- developing capacities for intake of useful elements;
- building initial preceptions of the sound-world around us and available for exploration;
- building initial awareness of sound-relationships;
- fostering personal involvement with the sound-movement world in order to develop heightened perceptions and awareness of the elements useful in expressive communication.

In Schulwerk, this area of the intake-acquisition processes encompasses such activities as: follow-the-leader, echo, and mimetic processes in speech, movement, body percussion, singing, and instruments, to develop basic preceptions of relationships available in the area of expressing elemental musical ideas, such as relationships of durational elements of sound; relationships of pitch elements; timbre; dynamics; and any other possible relationships of sound elements. The overriding aim is to develop an awareness of, a sensitivity to, elements that are functional and usable in expressive communication. And the most important avenue toward realizing this aim is to have the children *participate* in sensory experiences under the adept guidance of astute teachers.

The manipulative-divergence process area encompasses the following kinds of processes:

- exploration of the diverse ways to manipulate elements of expression;
- experimentation with degrees of relationships among elements;
- varying and adapting elements according to degrees of relationship;
- generating new ideas about expressive communication;
- stretching the imagination;
- rearranging and reorganizing expressive elements;
- drawing from experience knowledge to be adaptable in new situations;
- discovering new knowledge for new situations;
- developing fluency in manipulation of the elements of expressive communication;
- developing processes for accommodating new insights.

All of these processes involve, simultaneously, and as an outcome, discovery of new relationship potentials among the elements useful in expressive communication, and development of skills with processes necessary to expressive communication. Basically, in this process area the task of the teacher is to prod thinking into new channels.

In Orff-Schulwerk, the teacher guides the children to explore in areas such as rhythm, metric-relationships, pitch and pitch-pattern relationships, timbre, pulse, dynamics, and simultaneity of sounds. The children are urged to try new patterns and see if they are functionally valid, in movement, speech, singing, playing of instruments, and all the other specific activity-areas in Orff-Schulwerk. Further devices used in this context include canonic and contrapuntal devices which further reinforce understandings of

independence and interdependence in relationships of simultaneous expression-lines. Also included here would be exploration of drone-fifth and ostinato patterns of accompaniment, and all the improvisatory developments of Schulwerk.

In short, these manipulative-divergence processes in Orff-Schulwerk indicate that the way to achieve adaptive, flexible, expressive skills is mainly through the development in the child of habits of exploration, experimentation, and improvisation through guided experiences. The manifesto involved is that not all solutions to problems of communication through music and movement can be found in mind-sets, in formulas, in charts, in stereotypes, and in single, all-embracing answers. If this becomes the case, then we are in no way dealing with music as either personalized expression of functional communication. The importance of the teacher again becomes compounded. He must lead the child to the threshold of discovery.

In the third large classification of process-areas as used here, the manipulative-synthesizing processes, the following specific processes would most likely be subsumed:

- processes for organically relating individual element-potentials into functionally expressive wholes;
- selecting from alternatives;
- evaluation related to utilization and function of expression.

What we have here are basically convergent-thinking processes for forming sound-images that convey relatively complete and understandable musical ideas. These processes revolve around attaching personal significance to an expressive communication through active, functional, and integrative use of the elements of such communication in a form efficient for the purpose. All of this involves making decisions based on a developing sophistication of discriminatory powers. Discrimination is basic to decision-making; and decision-making is basic to whatever is involved in aesthetic judgement.

Manipulative-synthesizing processes in Orff-Schulwerk include those activities involving making decisions (individual and ensemble) about how to put vital parts together into a communicative whole, - developing an expression which has innate organic form and function. This includes processes like perfecting the development of a rondo sequence through choosing the media, performers, tonality, instrumentation or choreography, and all other possible elemental relationships, and certainly even choosing another form or manufacturing a new one. It could also include certain other related decisions like development of contrapuntal and other devices to further enrich the expression to be communicated.

But still, a synthesized process like this cannot become the chief end, in our viewpoint, but is another in the categories of possible learning processes. Like Commencement, it can also be indicative of a beginning, or one of many beginnings. Maybe we too often focus on the synthesis or closure aspect of process without leaving openings for further development. A well-developed, organically-interesting, functionally and aesthetically-satisfying, integrated piece of communication in music and movement is mostly manifestation of the process which developed such a communication. The process itself continues on into further and more sophisticated development. Products at any time can be "frozen" into the world of "being," but process must remain vital in the world of "becoming."

It is important to note that all three of the large process areas must con-

tinue to function in interaction in the total educative process. The primitivistic intake-acquisition processes are at work not only at the simple Schulwerk levels of rote, echo, and mimicry, but also continue in operation in spiraling importance in relation to the other processes. Even in the last group, the manipulative-synthesizing processes, which might be regarded as the most sophisticated, new insights and perceptions can still be acquired, and divergence-processes are of necessity still in evidence.

This whole area of process as the highest form of content needs to be the next large area of revolutionary activity in curriculum-development in music education. It represents a complete turn-around from the traditional mode of curriculum-building wherein the first thing that is looked at is informational content, and then processes are found to "get it across," or "cover it."

In our new taxonomy, we have as our first order of business the agreement on the most important processes necessary to music education. After that, we ferret out the teaching strategies that could most effectively make use of these processes, and how the subject matter or information could best be realigned so that it complements the teaching strategies. And this is one valid way that much of Orff's educational philosophy could be interpreted. There is no question that when people ask us what are the unique characteristics of Schulwerk, our answers lie primarily in the emphasis on process.

ORFF-SCHULWERK AND CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN EDUCATION THOUGHT

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Those of us intrigued with the delights of an Orff-Schulwerk-inspired program have a responsibility to be more than intrigued or delighted—we need to initiate and continue a serious search for and discovery of the educational implications of the Schulwerk—especially its relationship to the curriculum and the modern instructional scene in America.

The educational philosophies inherent in Orff-Schulwerk are, without a doubt, contemporary and up-to-date, as mirrored in the pronouncements of the most renowned and authoritative modern spokesmen for education, psychology, media specialism, philosophy, sociology, and music education. What leaders in these disciplines have been saying most clearly in recent years is that the most valuable and valid contemporary instructional philosophies include the following:

- procedures related to developing understanding of key concepts and the broad structure of a discipline;
- using inquiry techniques;
- individualization of instruction; personalization;
- necessity for the learner's active participation in the learning process;
- fostering creative behavior;
- the teacher as a guide and facilitator, as a catalyst for change; not the fount from whom all knowledge flows!

And these are precisely the kinds of philosophic concepts inherent in Schulwerk. To develop a possible model for initiating such a search for the relationships mentioned above, let me first posit some of the key points which Orff's educational philosophy seems to propound and begin to relate these to what some modern American thinkers in education, music, and related areas have written or said:

1. Schulwerk manifests a guided development of basic sensitivities to the fundamental nature of elemental music as a *personal communicative and expressive vehicle*.

From the Tanglewood Declaration: "Music and other fine arts, largely non-verbal in nature, reach close to the social, psychological, and physiological roots of man in his search for identity and self-realization."¹

Renowned Psychologist: "Education in music, education in art, education in dancing and rhythm, are far closer to intrinsic education, that is, of learning your identity, than other parts of education."²

From the Yale Report: "A basic musicality should be developed before

¹"The Tanglewood Symposium," special insert in *Music Educators Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 3, November, 1967.

²Abraham H. Maslow, Professor of Psychology, Brandeis U.; excerpts from speech before the Tanglewood Symposium, August, 1967.