

THE TEACHER'S PLAYGROUND

Tried and True Strategies

CMP Workshop

July 2016

DISCLAIMER

CMPers are not responsible for the loss of student achievement, insight, technical excellence and/or transfer of knowledge if strategies are taught while unconnected to outcomes.

Bags Game - *Mary Lynn Doherty*

Have students divide into two teams OR choose just a few students as time permits. Two versions of the game are as follows:

Musical Elements: Allow students to throw bags until they get one in the hole - they then share info about the piece's musical elements (from basic to advanced). The number of responses is equal to the number of throws. Create a poster or digital display of all of the responses to keep track of answers. Discourage repetition and encourage a more advanced level of responses.

Affective Contributions: Choose a few students (maybe 5 or 6)- allow them to throw until they get one in the hole. Discuss with the class how different people approached the game, what arm they threw with, how many tries they needed, ask the players how they felt (stressed? nervous? excited? bored? whatever) and then relate this to the ensemble's work together. Each person might approach things differently, bring a different skill set, or set of experiences, but we all have the same goal. Transition to a journaling activity incorporating individual responses related to the singing of XYZ piece. Questions can include things like: what personal connections are you making to XYZ piece? how do you feel about our progress on the piece? what line of text speaks to you in the piece and why? and so on!

The Color Wheel - *Mary Lynn Doherty*

Display the color wheel and have a brief discussion of how different colors make students feel. Talk about the function of color in visual art, clothing, how one decorates their house, and so on. Discuss how it can be used to reflect a mood or feeling or affect (elevate/depress) a mood or feeling. Transition to how color is used in music. Reference vocal tone that is more reflective of a dark color, and tone that is more reflective of a brighter color. Once the initial discussion has taken place, display the wheel and use it for reference when students need to achieve a more unified tone color or timbre, and for assisting with expression in general. (Ex. While students don't always understand what the director means by "darker tone color", most students recognize the differences between teal/royal blue/navy blue.)

Sleuths and Saboteurs - *Melissa Schoonover*

Establish an in-tune note (or chord for more advanced). Then have students close their eyes, and you or a student walks around the room and taps several students on the shoulder. These students will be the saboteurs who will intentionally play out of tune or with poor tone quality. Have students play again (works best with eyes still closed so none of the sleuths can use their eyes to find the saboteurs). The class then tries to identify the saboteurs. This can be used for tuning/intonation/tone quality/understanding of key signature. It is also fun to have the students, before identifying the saboteurs, guess the number of saboteurs in the room. As saboteurs are identified, they correct their note. Repeat until all saboteurs have been identified.

Bach Can't Run Marathons - *Ray Ostwald*

Display a picture of Bach: Big powdered wig, large man in a flowing robe, and then ask the students to imagine him running a marathon. Or better yet, put on a wig and a black choir robe, and run a few yards. Bach Can't Run Marathons. Write it on the board, say it together a few times, write it in their journals... then transition to BCRM, and to Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Modern. I then explain that this covers the periods in which an orchestra existed, and most of the modern orchestral instruments. To be thorough, we can admit that we don't know Bach personally, so we should address him as MR. Bach, adding Medieval and Renaissance to the M-R-B-C-R-M. Then, we have to admit we have two R's, but they always say "Renaissance sounds older," and as far as the two M's, who would reverse Medieval and Modern? MR. Bach Can't Run Marathons.

“Stand UP!” - *Ray Ostwald*

When working on awareness of your role, of melody, and balance, have students STAND UP when they have the melody (or the “subject” in a fugue). Less aware students will realize that some or many of their peers know when they have the melody. After the first time, with its fun and chaos, do it again, and have students exaggerate balance dynamics by playing very soft except when they have the melody, which they should play very loud.

Encouraging memorization - *Ray Ostwald*

When a student has a certain passage memorized, on a special day, they earn the right leave their spot in the ensemble and stroll around the outside of the room, or sit by a friend, or listen to the piece from in front of the ensemble (while still playing). Modify incentive for cellos and others who must remain seated...

“Extra Scores” - *Ray Ostwald* (Band and Orchestra, Choir when doing a piece with orchestra or band)

Buy or make extra copies of the score, and offer them to students to follow:

- ★ If you review a recording the day after a concert.
- ★ For a student to take home to listen with the score.
- ★ If you listen in class, give scores to some or all students.

Four Quarters - *Matt Temple*

During warm-ups, have students play four quarter notes on each pitch of a scale up and down.

Vary your conducting so the students play various dynamics, tempos, rubatos, crescendos, decrescendos, etc., and learn to react to different conducting patterns. Have students identify what each style/articulation looks like, and have them conduct each style themselves using a pencil. This exercise is also helpful for learning new scales since each pitch is repeated several times before proceeding to the next one.

Dealer’s Choice - *Matt Temple*

During sectionals, have students identify which parts of the piece they need to work on. Encourage students to be very specific about what needs to be addressed: wrong notes, rhythms, articulations, dynamic shapes, etc. Help facilitate their progress by asking questions: Are you pleased with that change? Did it change enough? What do we need to do next? Sections that are not playing a given passage can provide critical feedback as well.

Post It Patterns – *Judy Meyer Hays*

Give each student a post it and ask them to write one measure of rhythm in 4/4. Have them post it on their chair and then walk around the room playing each other’s. You can also walk around pulling those that are incorrect and assist those students in correcting. Combine patterns and create an ostinato to accompany a song you’re singing in class.

PowerPoint to pdf – *Judy Meyer Hays*

If you’ve got a subject that you’ve found a number of sites for and you want your students’ laptop/tablet time to be focused, or want to provide additional exploration at home, create a PowerPoint hyperlinking each site to an icon, then save your slide as a pdf and post it on your website for download by students or as a link for them to open.

Human Keyboard - *Mona Roy*

8 to 13 students create an octave with our without black keys bit sitting or standing next to each other in a straight row with the voices arranged from lowest to highest voice. Two or more students are standing--the reigning champion and a challenger. The reigning champion begins by creating a five note pattern (pressing the 'keys' which are people's heads.) The challenger recreates the five note pattern (pressing the 'keys'). The reigning champion adds five new notes so that the pattern is now 10 notes long, etc. If time permits, I like to build it up slowly by adding one more note at time. This is a great way to reinforce and teach major and minor scales, patterns and can even be adapted to teach modes. It also utilizes kinesthetic learning, inner ear, audiation, and independence.

Every other Measure - Mona Roy

Have students sing (or play) their part (or unison ensemble) on every other measure. They are to audiate the measures in between. You can be flexible in playing with the 'rules'. They must watch you for unpredictable cues. Students can use hand signs on the 'muted' measures. It gives kids an inner ear workout and tools to bridge pitches. Students are continually strengthening their inner ear when listening, performing, improvising and playing.

Function Chorales – Bill Rank

Here's a great way to warm-up and balance while having students analyze.

Function Chorale on “Simple Gifts”

	o	o	♪ ♪	♪ ♪	♪ ♪	o	♪ ♪	o
S	1	1	6 7	1 7	1 7	1	6 7	1
A	5	5	4 5	4 4	5	5	4 4	5
T	3	3	2 2	2 2	3	3	4 2	3
B	1 7	6 5	4 5	6 5	1 7	6 5	1 5	1
	I Δ7	vi-7	ii V	vi-7 V7	I iii	vi-7	iv V7	I

Give and take! – Giuseppe Jeffrey

Students will take a piece of music for sight reading and sing through the entire piece. Then students will be asked to sing it again while leaving out certain pitches. This can be modified many ways. Some students can be assigned to sing only specific pitches from the scale. Students can be asked to only sing notes of specific durational value.

Forward and backward – Giuseppe Jeffrey

Students will sight read a piece of music from the beginning and then sing the exact same piece of music backward. This will challenge them in their audiation of intervals and rhythms.

Follow the Leader – *Josh Chodoroff*

The teacher will identify one student secretly before class begins. That student will be the "hidden leader" for the exercise. When class begins, the teacher instructs the students to play/sing a scale they have been working on. However, instead of the teacher conducting, one student in the group will actually be leading the exercise from their spot. This person knows who he/she is. The group will all start together on the first note of the scale, then after that they may not move to the next pitch until they hear the leader change notes. The leader should not try to be loud and stick out of the texture; make everyone listen closely. At the end, the teacher asks who they think the leader was.

Timbre 101 – *Josh Chodoroff*

The teacher will play about 1 minute of several different recordings of Barber's Adagio as performed by different ensembles. Students will be asked to name the instruments they hear. At the end, they will be asked to write and discuss how the different ensembles changed the feeling of the same piece of music. Which was their favorite? Why?

Heart to Heart - *Paulette Boddy*

This is a fast, efficient, and effective way to give an informal assessment (baseline/pre-test) in class to help you design instruction. Have students place one of their hands on their heart, as if to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Lay some ground rules: 1. You are not to look at your neighbors, only the teacher 2. Tell the truth - you're speaking from the heart and 3. The fingers of the hand are the gauge with 5 fingers on the heart being the highest ranking answer. Some examples of questions:

- How much do you know about (insert topic here... Greek gods? King Arthur?)
- How loudly were you singing just now? (Must have already set a standard default.)
- How much do you like or how do you feel about (insert anything here... mysterious things? dying? being alone? going to parties?)
- How comfortable are you doing (insert task/verb)?
- Our run-thru of the piece a moment ago: rank how the entire class did on (insert criteria here... accuracy and buoyancy of melismas? expressiveness of meaning?), rank how YOU personally did on the run-thru?
- How prepared are you to sing (insert title) in front of an audience if the concert were right now?
- How prepared are you to take our quiz on Friday?

Down Memory Lane - *Paulette Boddy*

During the last week of school (or the semester), I pull out pieces from the entire year. I allow students to relive their experience with (outcomes of) the piece. Students are encouraged to share their favorite feelings, the background, and related activities of each song before we sing it. I have even used this as a review for a "songs quiz". For 8th graders, I have pulled out songs since their 6th grade year. I am amazed at how much detail they recall! ... This becomes a sentimental closure to their time with me and the music we shared together.

Thanks to the Wisconsin Committee for these additional strategies:

Shape It [Kinesthetic] – *Chris Gleason* the purpose of this strategy is to get the students to explore moving to the music and creating "shapes" with their bodies. The hope is that this kinesthetic approach will yield greater expression on their instruments.] a. Ask for 5-6 volunteers to come to the front of the room. Have them grab the elastic band and move in and out, etc to the recording (Dalcroze). Encourage them to shape and move to the music show peaks and valleys of each phrase. Have the other students watch before they create their own groups etc. b. Have the students perform the phrases with the expression and shaping they exhibited with the elastic bands.

Embellish a Familiar Melody [Auditory] – *Chris Gleason* Select a melody that will be easily recognized by students (e.g. Twinkle, Twinkle, Somewhere over the Rainbow, Shortnin' Bread, etc.) Select a key that will be easy for all students and model the melody for your students. Invite students to play melody with you. Model variations – invite students to copy and then continue with new variations (e.g. changing a note, changing a rhythm, delaying a phrase, anticipating a phrase).

Kahoot.it [Visual, Auditory] – *Chris Gleason* Kahoot is an online program that has student log into a site using a code. The students see the questions on the screen in your room and use their own devices to answer the questions. It can be competitive, but you can also turn the “points” off to make it more collaborative. <https://kahoot.it>

Coach’s Eye [Visual, Auditory] – *Chris Gleason* Coach’s Eye is an app made for Apple, Android, and Windows that allows the user to record, analyze and improve performance. The Coach’s Eye app links seamlessly to a device’s camera, allowing coaches and athletes to record video footage of a student’s movement or technique. The footage can then be reviewed, replayed in slow-motion and annotated on a mobile device; giving instant feedback and helping musicians improve their performance, faster. <https://www.coachseye.com>

Watch the Conductor - *Randy Swiggum*

To teach students to watch a conductor for preps, downbeats, and seeing the “moment” of the ictus, toss a tennis ball or hackey-sack in the air and ask students to play their attack at the moment you catch it. Then do it again with your conducting hand. Discuss the deceleration and acceleration, the plane where the ictus is “struck”, and why this works only for kids who grow up on planet Earth and understand gravity.

People Patterns - *Randy Swiggum*

This strategy works great for visualizing musical form, but also can be used any time there are patterns formed in melodic or rhythmic passages. It can work with any form or pattern, but for this explanation, imagine a piece in ABA form. The teacher selects three students to come forward that clearly show “ABA” in some visual way (brown hair, red hair, brown hair; tennis shoes, sandals, tennis shoes, etc...) Ask the students to figure out how these three people are similar to the piece of music that they are studying. They might find an ABA that you didn’t intend, but that is even more fun! Sometimes, after they spot the ABA that was intended, they can be rearranged to form a different ABA pattern.

Lines and Spaces - *Margaret Jenks*

Sometimes, young students (or even older students) are thrown off by the language “on a line” or “in a space”. This fun activity provides an unforgettable experience with lines and spaces from the perspective of the line! Ask 5 students to lie down on their backs, forming the 5 lines of a staff. With a light ball (nerf or beach work well), bounce the ball between the students as the other students (watching) call out “SPACE!” and gently drop it on the “lines” (they catch it on their tummies), as students call out “LINE!”. For a more advanced version, they can name the line and space numbers, solfege syllables (given a “do”) or even pitch names. The line students need to be comfortable with catching (or not mind a light ball on their stomach!).

Part Books - *Randy Swiggum and Margaret Jenks*

Teach a Renaissance motet or madrigal with partbooks that you create with single line parts. Have students learn the piece or a portion of it this way.

Your Turn - *Miriam Altman*

Invite a volunteer to lead the ensemble in a structured activity during the rehearsal. For example, they can rehearse the B theme or lead the daily sight reading. Sit off to the side. Ask questions of the leader when appropriate and if needed. Helpful questions might include, “What you would like the group to do first?” “What should they do now?” “Do you want them try that again? Exactly the same way or should we change something?” “How do you want them to do xyz?”

Popsicle Sticks - *Miriam Altman*

Put each student’s name on a popsicle stick and let the sticks live in a mug in your classroom. Choose sticks at random to select individuals and/or groups to answer questions during discussions. Sticks can also be selected to make decisions for the group. (“Should we all sight read this passage using solfege or letter names?” or “Which riser will sing their interpretation of m 47-62 for the class? Then everyone else can try to emulate their ideas.”) Sticks can also be chosen to select student listeners. Those students might stay on the risers, come down front, or come down front with backs turned. Assessments that the listeners give can be oral (“I liked it when...”) or visual (“Hands up when you hear...”).

NOTES