PRESENTER

Paper: A Proposed Curriculum for a Creativity Centre
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A Proposed Music Curriculum for a Creativity Centre

As more people retire early or reduce their working hours, there is a concomitant increase in the number of people with much time to spare. In response to this burgeoning amount of leisure time, numerous Art Galleries are offering courses in drawing, painting, and sculpting, for novices. Conspicuously lacking are corresponding courses in music for adult novices.

This paper presents a new, multi-strand curriculum for introducing musically-untrained adults to the elements of music (melody, rhythm, harmony, texture, timbre, form, dynamics). Intermediate strands explore the uses of these musical elements in greater depth; and the advanced strands examine musical structures found in Traditional, and Jazz/Popular idioms. An integrated approach of performing, listening, discussing and composing is adopted throughout. Computer technology is employed wherever appropriate, especially to provide opportunities for experimentation with immediate aural feedback. In this paper, detailed consideration is given to foundational assumptions, implementational strategies, learning experiences, and evaluative measures.

Because adults learn quite differently to children (for whom most curricula are at present designed), an entirely new approach is called for, based on precepts drawn from the field of Andragogy. The resulting curriculum framework may serve as a model for much-needed new adult curricula in other disciplines.

INTRODUCTION and RATIONALE
This music curriculum is designed for a utopian Creativity Centre - a place where adults with little or no previous musical experience can learn how to compose. The aim is for adults to discover their inner creative abilities while composing. At present, many Art and Community Centres meet the creative visual arts needs of adults by providing courses in art making. This utopian Creativity Centre is designed to fulfil a similar need in the music composition domain.

The making of music (both composing and performing) and listening to music are social activities and it is with this view in mind that classes offered by this centre would be small (10 to 15 participants). This would enable whole group, small group and individual compositions/improvisations to be created and shared and for the participants to engage in discussions of the development of these ideas as the pieces are forming.

"Performance", in the context of this curriculum, means participation in any form of practical music-making that may be possible in classes at the Centre. It does not mean that all participants will become expert performers - the interest and innate ability of the adults will vary considerably and need to be taken into consideration.

One of the basic aims of the compositional activities in this curriculum is to ensure that all participants become aurally aware of, and sensitive to, a wide variety of sounds. Aural awareness should lead initially to a desire to use sound to create patterns as 1) a means of self-expression, 2) a means of acquiring and understanding the concepts involved in the organisation of sound, 3) a means of developing the skills involved in the creation of compositions, and 4) as an initial step to understanding how sound is used by others.

It is no longer enough for music educators to be working only in the context of the school. Programs that aim to continue fostering our creative selves after we have left school, need to be developed. Adults in our society also have creative musical needs and desires, which need to be supported.

Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project:

"... composition is merely a statement of someone's musical thoughts, and everyone has musical thoughts."
MISSION STATEMENT

It is the aim of this Centre to empower adults to develop and celebrate their innate musical abilities through composition.

PHILOSOPHICAL STATEMENTS

There are several philosophical statements that underpin this curriculum for the Creativity Centre. They include:

* Music is an essential part of contemporary society and plays an important role in everyday life. It is a significant part of every culture. The study of music can help to foster an awareness and appreciation of culture and cultural traditions. A culturally diverse society, such as ours, provides a rich resource for the exploration and enjoyment of a wide range of musical experiences. The curriculum for this Creativity Centre draws upon musical examples from a wide variety of cultures and sources.

* The understanding and appreciation of contemporary music is seen as a springboard to aid musical and social understanding. Music of the past, in its historical context, is also viewed to be of merit in developing a deeper understanding of musical and social traditions. Different music appeals to and inspires different people. It is with this thought in mind that this curriculum draws upon music from all historical periods including music of today.

* The processes of fostering a musical awareness in adults are significant because they contribute to the ongoing enrichment of the adult's life.

* At an individual level, music is a medium of personal expression, enabling people to share ideas, feelings and experiences. All people have the capacity to respond to and participate in musical activities. All people should have the opportunity to develop their individual abilities and aesthetic potential through responding to music throughout their entire lives.

* As an art form, music is a medium through which the relationships among feelings, the intellect and imagination can be expressed.

* Music is a symbol system, which implies meaning and conveys information. For people to effectively exchange musical ideas (as both performers and composers), a common system of notation needs to be adopted. Throughout this curriculum, the participants are encouraged to “mess around with sound” and to improvise, but also then taught how to write their musical ideas down so that they can share their music with others as well. The aid of technology here is vital as a tool in transforming these “sound ideas” into a more concrete form – a musical score.

* Music-making individually and in groups (as composers, performers and critical listeners) will foster an enrichment of the adult's intellectual, aesthetic, social and emotional well-being.
THE ADULT AS SELF-DIRECTED LEARNER

"Adult education is a process whereby persons whose major social roles are characteristic of adult status undertake systematic and sustained learning activities for the purpose of bringing about changes in knowledge, attitudes, values or skills". (p.9  Darkenwald and Merriam).

With this definition adopted for the curriculum of the Creativity Centre, it is assumed that adults undertaking these courses will exhibit and extend their independent decision-making roles. "Adults who have had many and varied experiences and who daily make decisions affecting their lives and the lives of their dependents are capable as well of participating in the planning and implementation of their own learning. They are also the ones who can most accurately judge the value of a learning activity and its relevance to their own lives". (p.77  Darkenwald and Merriam).

Apart from self-directed learning, this curriculum aims to:

* foster skills of interaction between participants
* foster an open-mindedness to a wide range of music so that the participants are able to make informed decisions as to the sort of music they interact with in life and why it is of meaning to them.
* emphasize considerable program flexibility. Programs must cater for adults with particular musical needs and interests, to be able to pursue more specialized skills, while at the same time continuing and reinforcing the development of musical literacy.
* foster a sensitivity within the participants to the viability of music in a changing society.

Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project:

"...the logic of discovery is far more exciting than the logic of the discovered."

"...music is a viable art and "treasured works" are but isolated moments in a vast history that is still being made today."

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TEACHER

The implementation of this curriculum requires the following two characteristics of its teachers:

1. Facilitator. Facilitating learning experiences requires knowledge of the goals and needs of the students. The teacher serves as a guide, a resource person, a creator of problems and a stimulus for creative thinking. The teacher's task is not to impose judgement but rather to cultivate judgements. The teacher is to stimulate, encourage and question rather than dominate, control and answer. Discovery may be guided but never dictated.

2. A music specialist - having expertise in the area of music, particularly that of composition and of teaching.
Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project:

"...the teacher who dominates and controls the students shrinks their creative and perceptive potential."

"...the purpose of education is to open minds and to provide the substance and enthusiasm for continued personal discovery and growth."

"...discovery may be guided but never dictated and creativity cannot be inflicted on students."

THE MUSIC CURRICULUM

Musical skills and musical concepts will be developed simultaneously - composing, performing and listening are all interwoven, supporting each other. The meaning of music is in the interaction, not the fragmentation, of musical elements. Musical knowledge has a concept-based foundation. While this curriculum is divided into courses based on individual musical concepts, the interaction and integration of these concepts, in forming the musical composition, is the ultimate goal.

Music of today reflects the broad social and environmental climate of the times. While contemporary musical sounds may be unfamiliar to adults for many reasons, the nature of the art today, is in tune with the real world that concerns them. There is also the consideration that today's art is the basis on which the music of the future will be built. If the adult is to make sense of contemporary society and to participate in creating the future, it is essential that opportunities be given for them to be involved in the thought processes and sounds of today’s composers.

Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project:

"Music of our time is the most logical place to begin music study. It is relevant artistically and educationally".

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

One of the most important considerations for the learning environment of the Creativity Centre is the actual learning atmosphere that is created by the participants and teacher. The atmosphere that is intended to be created is one, which supports creative risk-taking and creative brainstorming to create musical compositions. The specific atmosphere will change from one course to another, being influenced by the energy and interaction of the dynamics of each group of participants. This recognizes that each class consists of a collection of individuals unique personalities coming together to realize similar goals.
Unique features of the learning space:
1) The teacher is not constantly the entire focus of the class. This is to permit personal
discoveries and a wide range of judgement making to take place.
2) Most of the teacher's time is available for individual interaction with the course participants
meeting individual needs.
3) There are many types of compositional activities engaged in at any one time. Only a couple
of the assignments will be mandatory. Apart from this, the course participants are free to choose
whatever medium they wish to compose in.
4) Time is allocated for small and large group interactions as well as for individual work. The
interaction of the learners in many different forms is of vital learning importance. People learn
not just from themselves but also from the interaction with others who provide valuable creative
feedback.

AIM
The aim of this curriculum is to develop in adults the skills and knowledge necessary for:

* active participation in composing, performing, listening and discussion
* increasing aural awareness
* an understanding of all aspects of music
* awareness and appreciation of cultural traditions and past and present
  musical practices
* responding to music in individual ways through personal discovery and
  creative exploration
* increased personal enjoyment of music.

OBJECTIVES
The objectives of this curriculum are:

1. To develop the ability to create through:
   * organising
   * improvising
   * composing
   * arranging.

2. To develop aural awareness through exposure to a wide range of musical experiences.

3. To develop the ability to perform as a means of:
   * improving self expression
   * developing and expanding musical skills
   * acquiring simple solo and ensemble techniques
   * interpreting musical symbols.

4. To develop through listening and discussion an understanding of:
   * music as an art form
   * music in social, cultural and historical contexts
   * musical literacy.

5. To develop and extend a set of personal values about music.
CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

In this curriculum participants study:

1. the concepts of music

2. through the learning experiences of composing, performing, listening and discussion

3. within the context of a range of musical styles, periods and genres.

1. Concepts of Music

The content of this curriculum is organised around a conceptual approach to music and would include:

* duration
* pitch
* dynamics and expression
* timbre
* form
* harmony
* orchestration

Material is chosen from these concepts to meet the individual needs of the participants.

2. Learning Experiences

The learning experiences through which the participants gain musical understanding are composing, performing, listening and discussing.

Participants will develop skills through the integration of these processes. This involves:

* organising  * playing  * observing
* creating   * improvising  * discriminating
* notating   * discussing  * evaluating
* experimenting  * responding

The emphasis is on the exposure to a wide range of compositional experiences (both group and individual) in which participants are free to choose the style in which they wish to compose.

3. Contexts

Musical examples are drawn from a wide range of musical styles, cultures and historical periods, with an emphasis on contemporary music.

The curriculum is divided into three stages with further subdivisions into courses. The completion of each stage (or the demonstration of having the required knowledge) is required for progression to the next stage.
STAGE 1

Introductory Course: Composition for the Absolute and Terrified Beginner
[Handout]

STAGE 2

Course 1: I Got Rhythm

Course 2: I Got Melody

Course 3: I Got Harmony

STAGE 3

Course 1: I Got Arranging (Jazz, Popular or Classical)

Course 2: I Got Orchestration

Courses would be of 10-week duration with each weekly class being held on a weeknight for 3 hours. The focus of each class would be participation in compositional activities. However, discussion, performance and aural activities (both Ear Cleaning and listening to musical examples) would also be integrated into each class. Course participants would be encouraged to use composition as a form of self-expression, selecting stimulus ideas from the works of other composers. Participants would also learn how their musical ideas and compositions fit into the wider stylistic practices that have already been established by previous generations of composers.

When available, guest composers and performers would be invited to the classes to interact via seminar discussions. Performers would give feedback about performance styles and problems regarding compositions created in Stage 2 and 3 courses. Composers would describe their professional activities and philosophy and serve as role models for Stages 1, 2 and 3. The course participants are free to question, discuss and critically examine the issues raised.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment would comprise a number of strategies including self, group, peer, and teacher assessment.

The compositional courses taught at the Creativity Centre are individual-oriented and stress that each person must be allowed to develop their creative talents at their own rate. These courses deal with the process of musicianship and with the nature and experience of involvement rather than with products.

There is no pass/fail assessment feature but rather, personal on-going assessment is required throughout the course, integrated into each week of each course. The adult participant is seen as the primary assessor of the personal learning experience. This assessment will take into consideration the learning environment, the subject matter and the processes that have been undertaken. A compositional process diary and a portfolio will be kept as an aid to this
assessment process. The process diary contains the ideas, inspirations, thoughts and processes that have contributed to the creation of the compositions, whether they have originated in or out of class. The portfolio contains the process diary together with the class notes, handouts, activities and completed compositions (in whatever form, e.g. disk, cassette tape, score).

The participants are encouraged to make comments in the weekly classes about the process and all of the works that are being created, not only their own compositions but compositions by the other class members as well. In this way a positive, supportive, creative environment is established in which people are comfortable enough to take creative risks and to seek and value the assessment of other class members.

The teacher’s main role is to guide group discussion and peer assessment in such a way as to promote the development of an enriching, creative environment supportive of the needs of the participants. The teacher also provides feedback to the participants as appropriate.

Each course culminates in the presentation of a musical soiree. This is held in the final week of the term and forms a part of the ongoing informal assessment by the participants. For the soiree each person is expected to have performed at least one of their musical compositions written during the term, preferably with themselves as one of the performers. The composition may be a solo or group composition, improvisation or computer-presented work. These musical evenings are informal in character and constitute an important extension of the social environment of the class.

CONCLUSION

The curriculum that has been presented here is designed (as stated at the start of this presentation) for a utopian Creativity Centre. It is envisaged that this Centre would run music composition courses for adults (though would not be restricted to just courses for adult participants). There are distinctive differences between adults and children in the way they perceive, think, feel, remember, move and are motivated. Adults, therefore, demand different teaching materials, methods and goals, and they demand a different kind of teacher role.

Music composition courses for adults are the last frontier for the expansion of music education outside of the school and into the general community. This is where adults can continue to either expand the skills for composing music that they may have experienced in school or where they may begin to taste the delights in writing their first composition and thereby discover more of their human potential.

Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project:

"... the strongest bond between the musical art and the student is a sensitivity to contemporary life".

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


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