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## **Reimagining Pedagogical Possibilities in the Schulwerk: Intersections of Critical Pedagogy for Music Education and Orff**

By

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### **Abstract**

*Critical pedagogy for music education (Abrahams, 2005), as influenced by Freire's (1970) conception of critical pedagogy, emphasizes the importance of deconstructing power imbalances between students and teachers, in addition to placing students' musical cultures at the forefront of learning. Though the Orff Schulwerk teaching approach is similar to CPME in terms of its emphasis on student creation, collaboration, and improvisation, Benedict (2009) posited that Orff pedagogy might be a systematized, rigid method that neither fully engages students to critically interact with music nor considers their varying musical interests. The purpose of this paper is to examine how tenets of CPME can inform an Orff Schulwerk approach to enact critical reflection and action. By enacting Freire's conception of praxis, teachers might discover how students' musical cultures could influence an Orff Schulwerk pedagogy, resulting in learning experiences that are directly related to students' musical worlds both inside and outside of the classroom. When teachers discover how Orff Schulwerk can be realized as a problem-posing education, students might discover how they can use music to name their worlds and take action for purposes beyond musical outcomes.*

**Keywords:** critical pedagogy for music education, Orff Schulwerk, praxis, problem-posing education

Orff Schulwerk influenced my teaching as an elementary school educator and continues to inform how I teach undergraduate elementary generalists ways to make music accessible for their future students. Often, individuals who are unfamiliar with the Orff approach ask me, “What is Orff?” My response usually involves an explanation about how the teacher gradually leads students to become creators of music that is personally meaningful. If I share more, I usually explain how I use the approach to ensure that all students’ contributions are worthy of respect and inclusion when they work to respond to musical challenges. Some teachers who are trained in Orff Schulwerk might respond similarly, while other teachers may share that they adapt the approach in different ways depending on their training or the specific needs and interests of their students. Teachers who do not fully engage in the Orff teaching process but rely on textbooks and curriculum guides, which often include activities with Orff instruments, might also define the approach differently than teachers who are fully trained in Orff Schulwerk. As a result of educators’ contrasting understandings of the approach, it might be difficult to provide an answer that encapsulates what Orff pedagogy fully entails.

At a point when I was confident that I could provide a suitable answer to this inquiry, I read a piece of scholarly literature suggesting that Orff Schulwerk might be a systematized method (Benedict, 2009). Like many who wish to protect their familiar territory, my visceral response was defensive and argumentative. My conception of the Orff approach and how I applied it in the classroom was far removed from procedural and rigidly structured teaching methods. It was not until a practical situation occurred that I questioned my own teaching and if my practices were a by-product of essentialist views or a value-laden set of beliefs.

Before embarking on my PhD, I taught at an International Baccalaureate school (pre-K–5). Each year, we celebrated the International Day of Peace, observed annually on September 21.

My administration asked me to prepare students to sing a song in celebration of this event, and I chose the song “Our Time” from the musical *Merrily We Roll Along*. When I asked my students to reflect on the song, specifically on the lyrics “we’re the names in tomorrow’s papers,” I was shocked when they were not able to describe how it applied to them. I had to deliver what I believed to be the answer: “It’s who you are going to be in the future.” In doing so, I began to wonder if the way I enacted Orff Schulwerk limited the potential for them to envision who they could become. Throughout my teaching, was I more focused on students developing holistically, or was I solely focused on students becoming creators of their own music?

As I concurrently pursued my Master of Music in music education, I began to study critical pedagogy for music education (Abrahams, 2005a) and drew parallels between this pedagogy and Orff Schulwerk. Further, I began to step outside of my familiar territory by acknowledging that my practices could be exclusionary; in fact, I began to microanalyze nearly every aspect of my teaching. As uncomfortable as it was, it led me to the understanding that my views of Orff Schulwerk are not necessarily impartial. In consideration of this, I attempted to widen my lens by acknowledging the perspectives of other educators and scholars, and in doing so, I contemplated whether there might be a significant difference between “the Orff approach” and “an Orff approach.” I then found myself asking, “What is Orff?,” and I began to explore how critical pedagogy for music education (CPME) might inform an Orff approach.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how tenets of CPME can inform an Orff Schulwerk approach to enact critical reflection and action. First, I describe Paulo Freire’s conception of critical pedagogy and his influence on CPME. Next, I discuss the Orff Schulwerk approach, relying on sources from Orff (1963, 1976) and Shamrock (1986, 1995). I then explore the similarities and differences between each pedagogy, after which I discuss how a narrow

understanding of Orff Schulwerk might lead individuals to perceive it as a rigid method. Finally, I reimagine how CPME might inform Orff Schulwerk as a problem-posing education involving critical reflection and action.

### **The Development of Critical Pedagogy for Music Education**

Freire's (1970) insights about education have influenced educators to critically examine current educational practices and reflect on the power dynamics between themselves and their students. Freire argued against a teacher–student dichotomy in which teachers operate as oppressors and the students serve as the oppressed. Reflecting on his teaching experiences in the 1960s, Freire claimed that oppressors believe that those beneath them are incompetent, and the oppressors characterize themselves, in their elevated hierarchical states, as generous for sharing their knowledge with the oppressed (p. 59). The banking method involved what Freire described as the oppressor depositing knowledge into the oppressed, believing that they are empty vessels who are merely able to “receive, memorize, [and] repeat” (p. 72). Freire advocated for a critical pedagogy centered on the idea that teachers and students must engage in collaborative, reflective, and dialogical conversations in order to deconstruct oppressive forces (p. 87).

For students to engage in reflective dialogue and address the problems they encounter, Freire (1970) proposed a problem-posing education. This involves students closely investigating their worlds and engaging in praxis, which Freire described as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 51). Throughout the process of praxis, Freire believed that students need to name their worlds, indicating that it is crucial in order for individuals to apprehend their full humanization (p. 137). Freire insisted that dialogue is essential in the process of students using word to name their worlds. According to Freire, “If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they

achieve significance as human beings” (p. 88). However, dialogue is not possible in relations characterized by domination; rather, dialogue requires that the oppressed remain committed to love as a dialogical act toward liberation and freedom (Freire, 1970). Freire proclaimed, “If I do not love the world—if I do not love life—if I do not love people—I cannot enter into dialogue” (p. 90). Hence, dialogue, as it relates to a problem-posing education, cannot exist between those who wish to speak for students and those whose right to speak has been taken away.

Abrahams (2005a) adopted tenets of critical pedagogy as a framework for CPME. According to Abrahams (2005a), CPME “broadens the tenets of critical theory beyond the realm of critical thinking through problem-posing and dialogue” (p. 8). Teachers of CPME aim to “break down the walls between ‘our’ music and ‘their’ music” (Abrahams, 2005a, p. 14) and engage in musical activities in which the students and teachers both find value. To do so, teachers of CPME consider the following questions: “Who am I? Who are my students? What might they become? What might we become together?” (Abrahams, 2005a, p. 9). Abrahams asserted that there are no concrete answers to these questions, as they are dependent on varying teaching contexts.

Teachers of CPME create learning opportunities by acknowledging the students as they are, recognizing their particular strengths, and determining how to address their needs (Abrahams, 2005a, p. 6). In the learning process, the students and teacher pose musical problems, make connections to how those musical problems relate to their own worlds, and discover innovative ways for presenting their understandings. This practice closely aligns with Freire’s (1970) notion of a problem-posing education, about which he said, “The program content of education is neither a gift nor an imposition ... but rather the organized, systematized, and developed ‘re-presentation’ to individuals of the things about which they want to know

more” (p. 93). Hence, the learning experiences in CPME lead students and teachers to see one another’s music as part of a collective reality, enhancing the potential for them to pose and solve problems through conversational and musical dialogue (Abrahams, 2005a).

When students and teachers closely engage with one another’s music in CPME, they experience a change in their perceptions by connecting unknown music to that with which they are familiar (Abrahams, 2005a, 2014). Abrahams (2005a) asserted that this leads to “conscientization,” points at which students experience an “aha!” moment, similar to what Freire (1970) described as the time at which “the perception and comprehension of reality are rectified and acquire new depth” (p. 104). Abrahams (2005a) claimed that meaningful learning can occur when the students and teachers are teaching one another ways that enable them to acquire these new depths.

### **Orff Schulwerk**

While CPME is a rather new pedagogical model, teachers in the United States have practiced the Orff Schulwerk teaching approach as early as the 1950s (Hughes, 1993). I will describe the Orff Schulwerk teaching approach by primarily referencing Shamrock’s (1995) *Orff Schulwerk: Brief History, Description, and Issues in Global Dispersal*. Shamrock, a PhD graduate from the University of California, Los Angeles, is a past president, journal editor, and conference chair of the American Orff Schulwerk Association (AOSA) and was also a recipient of AOSA’s Distinguished Service Award (1999–2000). As the Professor Emeritus from California State University and a previously active instructor for Orff-teacher professional development courses, her experiences as an educator, combined with her research in Orff Schulwerk, designate her as a credible source for providing a survey of this pedagogy.

Orff Schulwerk is a pedagogical process used to promote creative music making for elementary students. Carl Orff recognized that play could enhance musicianship with the use of speech, song, instruments, movement, and improvisation. When discussing the value of these principles, Orff described, “The Schulwerk way of making music has released in [children] musical powers, that, if their musical education remains solely *reproductive*, stay buried” (as cited in Shamrock, 1995). As opposed to product-oriented methodology, the Orff approach involves teachers taking progressive steps to guide students toward short- and long-term goals that teachers do not define in advance (Shamrock, 1986).

Orff (1963) described the approach as elemental, referring to it as the unification of movement, dance, and speech. Students experience these elements through processes that emphasize musical concepts, such as rhythm and melody. These musical processes include exploration, imitation, improvisation, and creation (Shamrock, 1995). As students progress through the exploration of sound, movement, and imitation in response to vocal, instrumental, or kinesthetic stimuli, they demonstrate a greater sense of responsibility during the improvisation and creation stages. During these latter stages, they assemble larger pieces with speech, movement, singing, and Orff or other percussion instruments (Shamrock, 1995). Shamrock (1986) stated that there is no particular order in which these activities should unfold, as teachers should adapt them according to their own learning contexts.

According to Orff (1963), teachers who use this approach should be willing to release a sense of authority in the classroom, as they might be “stimulated by the possibilities in a work which is never quite finished, in flux, constantly developing” (p. 69). The approach is somewhat an organic process that evolves based on ideas and suggestions that occur in the moment and, therefore, influence how students decide what happens next in their musical learning. Typically,

the Orff approach involves the teacher preparing students to independently manipulate musical materials, such as having students create their own accompaniments or movements to music (Shamrock, 1995). Shamrock (1986) further insisted that teachers “enjoy the challenge of striking out in new directions,” as musical results from different groups will vary (p. 44). However, the teacher should always be prepared to take on a leadership role when students need guidance in exploring ideas and discovering ways to bring them to fruition (Shamrock, 1986).

### **Similarities Between Orff Schulwerk and CPME**

While those who developed Orff Schulwerk and CPME did so at different times and for distinctive purposes, both approaches share similar components. One common element between Orff Schulwerk and CPME is the incorporation of improvisation as a means for students to have agency in expressing their musical ideas. Orff (as cited in Salmon, 2012) wrote, “What is important is to let the child develop [their] own playing and to keep away anything that might interfere; word and sound have to be created from rhythmical play by way of improvisation” (pp. 14–15). This practice is an integral component of Orff Schulwerk, as teachers view students as the creators of music and also acknowledge the value of their musical contributions. Similarly, Abrahams (2005a) noted that instances of musical dialogue in CPME often include “improvisation to construct meaning in some creative way,” and further insisted that improvisation is typical in learning environments where teachers practice CPME (p. 6).

Teachers of Orff Schulwerk and CPME also aim to cultivate collaborative learning environments in which students express their musical ideas in group settings. In an Orff Schulwerk classroom, group work necessitates a sense of collaboration in which individuals freely exchange ideas and negotiate them when designing solutions to musical tasks. To encourage this, teachers emphasize that “everyone learns from everyone; rivalries and tendencies

of competition are to be avoided carefully” (Hartmann, 2017, p. 25). Likewise, CPME involves peer collaboration and collaborative experiences between students and their teachers. In CPME, collaboration provides students “opportunities to make musical meaning and [to] explore their own musical ideas” (Abrahams, 2014, p. 52) as they can work with one another to share how their ideas can inform the learning process. The role of collaboration in both Orff Schulwerk and CPME allows for students to construct new musical meanings when they can adapt their ideas with others.

Both Orff Schulwerk and CPME also focus on cultivating a student–teacher relationship in which the teacher is not the sole possessor of knowledge and the students are fully aware of their autonomy. When teachers serve as facilitators in an Orff Schulwerk classroom, they initiate a group culture through musical experiences (Sangiorgio, 2010). Orff teachers focus on making connections to that with which students are familiar rather than emphasizing a particular way to create music. Further, teachers who enact the Orff approach remain conscious of how to establish a setting in which students are aware of their agency in the learning process, resisting Freire’s (1970) notion of a banking education in which “the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects” (p. 73). Rather than directing students to solve musical problems, the teacher works alongside students as a coauthor of creativity. In this sense, teachers of Orff Schulwerk collaborate with students to determine how to musically represent the material with which they are working. An example of this might involve a teacher working with students in tandem to select what instruments or movements they might use to musically illustrate content from a rhyme or poem.

Similarly, CPME explicitly focuses on releasing power from the oppressor (i.e., the teacher) so that the oppressed (i.e., the students) are made aware of their agency in the learning

process. Teachers of CPME develop a partnership with their students, opposing the idea that students need to be *taught about* music. Freire (1970) described this relationship when he asserted that “the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers” (p. 80). In this regard, the teacher is not merely teaching the students but learning with the students. Abrahams (2005a) also emphasized that students have agency in not only constructing their knowledge, but in also having the opportunity to act and reflect on what they construct. In this sort of context, teachers of CPME serve as facilitators by assessing students’ processes for constructing knowledge as it occurs at multiple points throughout their learning experiences (Abrahams, 2005a).

### **Differences Between Orff Schulwerk and CPME**

While Orff Schulwerk and CPME share characteristics, there are also significant differences between each pedagogy. Orff Schulwerk’s cultural heritage is bound to the Greek idea of *mousike*, thereby placing elemental music and conceptual elements at the forefront of the pedagogy, whereas CPME involves students’ musical cultures as part of the classroom context, thus enabling them to explore musical concepts from an inductive stance. Derived from the word *elementarius*, Orff (1963) described elemental music when declaring that music is “never music alone, but music connected with movement, dance, and speech—not to be listened to, meaningful only in active participation” (p. 73). When teachers use elemental music in their pedagogical practices, it serves as a predetermined way for students to conceptualize musical elements. Further, if conceptual elements are at the forefront of the approach, this might imply that there is a larger consideration for what there is to learn as opposed to who is going to learn.

In contrast, CPME is influenced by a culture-in-context. Insofar as Freire (1970) influenced CPME, it is inherently political and deals with the lived realities of students in the

present time. Abrahams (2005a) claimed that teachers of CPME recognize this by “acknowledging that children come to class with knowledge they gain from the outside world and as such, that knowledge needs to be honored and valued” (p. 4). CPME involves teachers focusing on ways to make music contextually relevant to their students during in-class experiences. Abrahams (2005a) exemplified this when sharing a lesson during which students recomposed the Queen of the Night aria in a rendition of Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, starring Madonna in the traditional role. In today’s musical culture, this might involve recomposing the aria for Ariana Grande. Another example involved students using technology to reorganize the sections of the final movement in Beethoven’s 9th in response to a contemporary critic. Today, this might involve students using iPads or other electronic devices to accomplish this musical goal. Reflecting on the music as contextually relevant for students, Abrahams (2005a) remarked that “students said they felt valued when their music was acknowledged as important by the music teacher” (p. 13). Though Orff teachers select material that they believe will be musically stimulating, the content that they choose closely aligns with a pedagogy that promotes elemental music, that of which might not relate to what students are musically experiencing outside of school. This practice poses a stark contrast to CPME, as teachers of CPME guide student learning with material that is influenced by students’ musical cultures both inside and outside of the music classroom.

Whereas the Orff approach often involves the teacher initiating the musical conversation, CPME involves students and teachers reflecting on their worlds and solving musical problems in a dialogical context. Dialogue in Orff Schulwerk often begins with teachers using familiar speech to musically engage students. Goodkin (2013) claimed that “by insisting on attention to the *sound* of language ... Orff is crossing over to the linguistic intelligence that produces the

aesthetic beauty of poetry” (p. 20). In the first volume of *Music for Children* (Orff, 1990) speech exercises are comprised of nursery rhymes as the starting point for musical learning. In CPME, prior to students working independently or in groups, the steps in Abrahams’ (2005a) lesson format involve the students and teacher reflecting on musical experiences together and sharing their interpretations with one another. Thus, while CPME emphasizes dialogue as a reflective exchange of ideas, one might argue that the Orff approach focuses on language for its mere function as a musical tool thereby emphasizing musical conversations more so than purposeful reflections.

A significant difference between Orff Schulwerk and CPME is the explanation as to what it means to take action with music. In an Orff Schulwerk classroom, students take action by emphasizing musical practices, such as improvisation and creation, to liberate themselves from ideas regarding what their music should be. The creation stage, as Shamrock (1986) indicated, is the time at which students combine all previous stages into products, such as rondos; theme and variations; and literary materials as theater pieces that involve speech, movement, and singing (p. 43). Though students might apply the required skills for such music-making to areas outside of school, they usually concentrate on improvisation and creation for the musical purposes of the classroom context. In this sense, it is possible that students and their teachers tacitly accept current reality by ignoring what exists outside of the classroom. One might find this consistent with Freire’s (1970) caveat when he asserted, “If individuals are not critically engaged with their reality, apprehending it in fragments which they do not perceive as interacting constituent elements of the whole, they cannot truly know that reality” (p. 104).

Conversely, CPME was conceived of as a problem-posing education involving praxis (Freire, 1970); therefore, students’ musical cultures, already embedded within the classroom

context, encourage them to take action based on their lived realities. After students and teachers have reflected on their worlds in CPME, they take action through musical exploration in the classroom and decide how to take action outside of the classroom as well. Freire (1970) underscored the importance of taking action in a problem-posing education when he asserted, “People develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves*” (p. 83). To the extent that music educators and students find themselves encouraged to take action, Abrahams (2005b) noted that CPME “nurtures critical feeling in the act of reproducing culture (Bourdieu, 1977) by expressing music through composition, improvisation, and performance” (pp. 18–19). Unlike improvisation in Orff Schulwerk, teachers of CPME rely on improvisation for “Connecting Word to World” (Abrahams, 2005a, p. 9). This practice enables students to engage with improvisation to name their worlds, thereby encouraging them to musically communicate their own understandings and perspectives of reality. Hence, teachers of the Orff approach place a heavier emphasis on practices that are musically liberating within the confines of the classroom, whereas teachers of CPME emphasize music making for students to explore and question the reproduction of a culture of which they are part.

### **Problematic Encounters With Orff Schulwerk**

As two separate approaches, both Orff Schulwerk and CPME focus on negotiating the role of the students and teachers in order to make students aware of their agency in the learning process. In addition, each approach emphasizes collaboration and improvisation as components for musical learning. However, they diverge based on the purposes for which improvisation and reflection are used, in addition to the way that culture informs the learning context. To this end, one might argue that teachers enact Orff Schulwerk in a way that does not consider students’

musical cultures or their interpretations of reality. Considering how praxis influences CPME, in addition to how students and teachers engage with the pedagogy as a problem-posing education, perhaps an Orff Schulwerk pedagogy might benefit from similar influences. Otherwise, it might be possible for the Orff approach to succumb to a state of rigidity.

When discussing pedagogical approaches such as Orff and Kodály, Benedict (2009) claimed that “it can be posited that it is only the subsequent ritualisation, systematisation and codification of these approaches that have rendered them methods” (p. 215). If teachers enact Orff Schulwerk with a one-size-fits-all approach, this *unilateral choice* might provide students with *less choices* about how they could learn. In consideration of the idea that Orff Schulwerk is not always influenced by students’ musical cultures and their interpretations of reality, Benedict further argued that “in the process of self-estrangement from the kinds of problem posing found in musicking situations that are less clearly delineated by sequential ordering, both students and teachers become alienated from themselves” (p. 218). How can teachers resist such alienation when using an Orff Schulwerk approach, and might they discover ways to invite the students’ voices into the musical conversation in a more holistic way?

When Carl Orff spoke at the opening of the Orff Institute in 1963, he may have provided teachers with insight regarding how to adapt the approach in changing times. In his opening speech, he proclaimed,

I do not feel like the creator of something new, but more like someone who passes on an old inheritance, or like a relay runner who lights his torch at the fires of the past and brings it into the present. This will also be the lot of my successors, for if the idea remains alive it will not be bound by their mortality. Remaining alive also means to

change with and through time. Therein lies the hope and excitement. (Orff, 1976, p. 249 as cited in Shamrock, 1995)

To keep the torch lit through changing times, I propose that teachers of Orff Schulwerk envision the approach as a problem-posing education that involves reflective dialogue and action. By fully enacting Freire's (1970) conception of praxis, similar to its influence on CPME, teachers might discover how students' musical cultures could inform an Orff pedagogy, resulting in learning experiences that are directly related to students' musical worlds both inside and outside of the classroom. Further, if teachers envision Orff Schulwerk as a problem-posing education, students might discover how to name their worlds when interacting with the Orff processes and use their musical creations for a need to take action. To reimagine what Orff Schulwerk might become is to maintain the hope and excitement that Carl Orff envisaged when considering where his successors might go next.

### **Reimagining Orff Schulwerk**

Reimagining Orff Schulwerk might require that Orff teachers develop an openness for students to dialogue about the music they are performing, discover how it can genuinely represent who they are, and determine how they can use their music for who they can become. Rather than considering how an Orff Schulwerk approach can inform students' musical knowledge, perhaps educators might consider how students' musical cultures can inform Orff Schulwerk. As Freire (1970) discussed in regard to teachers, "From the outset, her efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking.... His efforts must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power" (p. 75). This requires that teachers dialogue with their students about their musical cultures to discover the knowledge and interpretations that students already possess about music.

When considering the Orff Schulwerk phrase, “sing, say, dance, play, create, improvise,” I imagine “dialogue” as the first of these seven actions. However, I propose that reflective dialogue should span over all musical activities as a concomitant construct for learning. Perhaps the taken-for-granted Orff phrase requires further investigation about its inherent meaning. Who chose the music that students are singing? To whose music are students dancing, and what is the impetus for what they create and improvise? If, for example, the Billboard Hot 100 is changing more rapidly than the passed-down repertoire that Orff educators often use to teach, perhaps teachers might consider expanding their repertoire to include students’ musical cultures and realities as they change through time as well.

If teachers of Orff Schulwerk were to use students’ musical cultures as a starting point for learning, imagine how this process might unfold. A simple inquiry about students’ musical interests might elicit responses that expand far beyond what teachers envision. Take, for instance, students who share their interest in the children’s song “Baby Shark” (Pinkfong! Kids’ Songs & Stories, 2015). Considering it peaked at 32 in the Billboard Hot 100 (Brooks, 2019), I argue that most students would sing it on repeat if prompted. While some might perceive this song as one that trivializes learning, I posit that it is an approachable song for students to discuss their lived realities. To enact reflective dialogue, the teacher might first play the song as the students sing along. As influenced by CPME, “the teacher ... acts as the discriminating musical connoisseur and places information into a context that is familiar to the student” (Abrahams, 2005a, p. 6). As such, after playing the recording, a conversation might transpire in which the students and teacher discuss the story’s sequence. Presumably students would identify that the song begins with the baby shark and further mentions mommy shark, daddy shark, grandma shark, and grandpa shark. The teacher might prompt students to reflect on the meaning of the

lyrics “let’s go hunt,” “run away,” and “safe at last” (Pinkfong! Kids’ Songs & Stories, 2015, 1:08–1:35).

Further, perhaps students could discuss how this song parallels their own lives. These discussions might involve students describing that they do not have a “mommy shark” or a “daddy shark.” Questions might revolve around what it would be like to go hunt, run away, and be safe at last if students have life circumstances that might be more difficult than those for the characters in “Baby Shark.” These discussions are consistent with and the following aim of CPME: “The classroom activities further students’ musicianship and enable them as musicians who think, act and feel at intense levels” (Abrahams, 2005a, p. 6). When this commitment to student learning influences an Orff pedagogy as well, students might begin to empathize with the other lived realities’ in the classroom whose circumstances make living more difficult, and perhaps they might think further about individuals outside of their purview.

Imagine how students might respond to the musical challenge of arranging a song from their musical cultures to portray who they are through the Orff mediums of singing, playing, and moving. In a problem-posing education, Freire (1970) wrote that “students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge” (p. 81). Upon reflection, students might design a musical representation of this song in a way that represents their own lives. What kind of sharks are in their families? How might they be challenged to create an authentic representation of this song in accordance with who they are? If students share that their life circumstances make living more difficult, how might the other “sharks” in the classroom think of ways to be more caring and supportive when they collaborate to musically illustrate, as the lyrics indicate, being “safe at last?” In the process of students engaging with a problem-

posing education, Freire stated, “Their response to the challenge evokes new challenges, followed by new understandings; and gradually the students come to regard themselves as committed” (p. 81). As students name their worlds accordingly, not only might they commit themselves to designing a musical portrayal of a baby shark in correspondence with who they are, but they might also commit themselves to a process of collaboration during which they musically illustrate how to interact with other students and, simultaneously, share empathy with them based on how they have named their worlds.

Embedded within this song is an ostinato that students could easily reproduce and adapt with classroom instruments, iPads, or any musical devices that they prefer. Students would abstract the pre-existing melody, with modified lyrics, in addition to the rhythmic and melodic patterns they perform from the song rather than receive these from the teacher. While some students might perform the ostinato, others may choose to be singers. Some might choose to perform the rhythmic and melodic patterns, while others may wish to use movement to imitate the sharks portrayed in the song. Meanwhile, the teacher, as the facilitator, would work with each group to help them convey their own representations. Like CPME, students’ musical cultures would now inform how teachers can enact an Orff pedagogy and connect it directly to the lives of their students. The phrase “sing, say, dance, play, create, and improvise,” based on the inherent meaning that I previously discussed, might take on a whole new meaning. Returning to the questions I posed regarding who chooses the music that students sing and dance, teachers would be able to respond, “Students.” When considering the impetus for which students create or improvise, teachers might respond with “their own lived realities.”

If the Orff approach uses composition and improvisation beyond musical outcomes alone, imagine how these practices might further enable students to name their worlds, identify existing

problems, and further explore who they can be. The reflective dialogue that students encountered during their original design of “Baby Shark” might serve as a platform that encourages them to take action. Freire (1970) claimed that the action that students and their teachers choose to take is a result of how they envision themselves in the world. Further, he asserted that “the teacher-student and the students-teachers reflect simultaneously on themselves and the world without dichotomizing this reflection from action, and thus establish an authentic form of thought and action” (p. 83). Fittingly, students might decide that it is necessary to perform a concert as a fundraiser for a local charity that supports students and families who are underprivileged. Perhaps the opportunity to musically portray their own rendition of “Baby Shark” made them more aware of their agency in the music classroom and, as a result, they desire to compose music to which they can ascribe personal meaning, as influenced by how they name their worlds and their interpretations of reality.

By using “Baby Shark” as a starting point, perhaps they decide on the theme of composing a community. Whereas students previously reflected on what kinds of “sharks” were in their families when informing one another about their lived realities, they might now wish to consider their lived realities as they are and compose what kinds of “sharks” they can become. During this process, the teacher might facilitate learning according to a goal of CPME, which enables “students to become more musical and better musicians and in the process effect [*sic*] change in both the students and their teacher” (Abrahams, 2005a, p. 8). Abrahams (2005a) shared that the teacher should provide an array of opportunities that emphasize doing and remain instinctive when determining whether to go with the flow or move on (p. 10). Accordingly, the students and teachers might explore the Orff processes of improvisation and creation, as outlined by Shamrock (1995). However, they would engage in these processes for the purpose of taking

action outside of the classroom as opposed to exercising these practices within the walls of the school.

Perhaps the teacher works alongside students as they write their texts, assign words to rhythms and melodies, create corresponding accompaniments, and develop movements that depict their music. Moments for improvisation might highlight students' individual musical cultures and influence their group's overall composition. Rather than question-and-answer improvisation as it often exists in Orff Schulwerk, these moments of improvisation might be the sounds of the journeys students embark on to become who they envision themselves to be. Perhaps the teacher might prompt improvisational ideas by asking introspective questions: What does it sound like as you grow through time? How fast or slow can you musically portray who you become? What does success or achievement sound like for you? How might the celebration of a community improvise collectively?

Here, teachers would need no book or arrangement. In a dialogical context, students and teachers can still find joy in exploring Orff mediums to compose by using instruments, body percussion, movement, or any variety of activities that students prefer for creating music. Rather than enacting the Orff approach for purely musical purposes, the way that students create and share their music would be determined by the ways they choose to name their worlds. As coauthors of creativity, teachers might express a heightened interest about the sounds that students prefer, the perceptions they hold, and how they wish to use their creations for purposes beyond a musical performance. The melody that students sing or play, the ostinati, paraphony, or any other chosen accompaniment that they would traditionally perform in an Orff classroom would not simply demonstrate a mastery of skills. Instead, it would represent music that was influenced by student reflection and designed for their need to take action.

Imagine the transformative aspect of students' desires to take action by not only performing "Composing a Community" as a concert, but also partnering with other schools or local music organizations to create music with their community. In addition to students performing their musical arrangements, other organizations could highlight features of their musical communities, all of which might be for a larger fundraiser. Students might cocreate music with other members of their community and, in doing so, inquire about their musical cultures. When discussing transformation, Freire (1970) claimed that individuals "come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (p. 83). In this regard, transformation would occur when students reflect on who they are within the world and envision their potential to positively influence others. By taking on a role similar to the teacher, dialoguing with members of the community and engaging them in musical reflection, these experiences may remind students of what led them to take action in the first place. Herein, they may reach a point of conscientization, as a change in their perception might occur regarding who they are. Freire proclaimed that "humankind emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled. Intervention in reality—historical awareness itself—thus represents a step forward from emergence, and results from the conscientização of the situation" (p. 109). Beyond what students created for "Composing A Community," perhaps they might further imagine who they can become by envisioning ways to inspire others to name their worlds and take action as well.

### **Conclusion**

This approach may not be strictly "Orff Schulwerk." As a problem-posing education (Freire, 1970), Orff Schulwerk as it exists would no longer exclusively emphasize musical elements, nor would it insist on any sort of process that disregards students' musical cultures and

realities. Rather, teachers would adapt components of an Orff approach in ways wherein reflection and action not only influence how musical learning occurs but also encourage students to name their worlds and use the music they create to take action accordingly. One might conceive of this as Orff Schulwerk as praxis or praxial Orff Schulwerk. Regardless of the name, I suggest that a problem-posing education combined with Orff Schulwerk principles can inspire students to critically engage with music in ways that not only enhance their musicianship but also enrich their personhood and communities beyond the classroom.

In this paper, I explored tenets of CPME and Orff Schulwerk to provide a framework that outlines how Freire's (1970) conception of praxis might inform and realize the Orff approach as a problem-posing education. I, like Orff, continue to carry the torch to guide myself in my own unfinished work and light the way as I continue to see who I can become. The way other teachers flourish their flames—the sustenance they give for them to burn—may not be the same as mine or Orff's, but I encourage them to find their way to light the flame, carry the torch onward, and allow for it to burn passionately as it changes through time.

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