



ORCHESTRA CINQUE QUARTI
IV Circolo Didattico di Piacenza

Una buona classe non è un
reggimento
che marcia al passo,
è un'orchestra che prova
la stessa sinfonia

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Composing Music in Primary School

DESCRIPTION

The conductor / composer / music expert chooses a story or a fairy tale, which...

- is age-appropriate in content and length for the children,
- has a theme consistent with the year program,
- has elements that lend themselves to sound interpretation (i.e: wind, storm, rushing rivers, festivals...) -
- has implicit or explicit descriptions of states of mind.

A teacher reads the story in the agora and asks questions as open as possible, in order to allow children to express their ideas, experiences, feelings and ethical values. A poster of the story (large size) is hung in the classroom, and each student receives a personal replica of it. At this point, the paths of linguistic, musical and graphics analysis processed by the experts run together and interseccate, supporting each other. The musical journey starts with the orchestral workshop: the conductor / composer reads the first lines of the story, analyzing the main characters (in our case joyful hardworking green elves) and their physical and emotional features. Then, the teacher asks the children to interpret the chosen characters with their instrument, setting a defined time (eg. 5 min). Every child seeks their sound, exploring their instrument, and at the end they are invited to share their own "piece." The music expert listens to the children's works, observes their gestures, captures their peculiarities, their rhythm, and points out these elements to the orchestra. Finally, he tests the "composition", harmonizing the instrumental sections one at a time. A first notation is written on the blackboard and the whole orchestra checks if it "works." The children are asked to hear, to express their aesthetic opinions and to add rhythmic / melodic changes that the music teacher listens to in order to get to a final draft of the score. Finally, the teacher hands out the music scores of the processed part for the next meeting, and the same methodology is applied for all the subsequent parts.

"Thus, creating music in school consists in a creative production of new music with techniques such as improvisation and composition. Composing implies developing songs with various types of sound events, planning processes and reviewing material" (Biasutti).

WHO ARE THE ACTIVITIES AIMED AT?

The classgroup has 23 children, divided into four instrumental sections: six cellos, eight violins, five clarinets and four percussion (marimba, glockenspiel, triangles, sticks).

WHERE DO THE PROPOSED ACTIVITIES COME FROM?

This practice comes from the choice of a multimodal teaching that uses different mediators: words, images, sounds, experiences, emotions in order to put the children in the condition for learning and expressing themselves in a personal way. From recent neuroscience researches. From the Kodalian methodology. From vocal and body education, where the voice is mainly used for word games and the body is a source of sound as in the body percussion approach. From the use of Orff instruments. From the practice of improvisation.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Task performance: the compositions are created and developed during playtime. The children explore the sound for the simple pleasure of it and feel their own sonic surroundings..." They evoke characters, situations, movements by the symbolic game of "let's pretend"... and finally, during the phase of regulated game, they organize sounds with rules that allow them to continue their creative process.

Emotional regulation: Music helps creativity, promotes well-being, reduces anxiety and alleviates the negative effects of some disorders (obsessive-compulsive disorder, and depression).

Cooperation: Cooperation is achieved through the production of musical compositions derived from listening and sharing reflections. The teachers play the roles of mediators: they must leave the children free to do and act, but at the same time they must establish a dialogue, in order to help them to critically analyze what they did.

HOW IS INCLUSION ACHIEVED?

The musical compositions arise from the improvisation practice and the creative production, which allow the children, especially those who struggle with formal notation, to express skills, sensitivity and emotions. Exploring sound creates a playful and joyful climate where everyone feels free to express themselves within the orchestra. The teachers optimize everyone's production with an attentive listening and a transposition to formal levels.

PECULIAR AND INNOVATIVE ASPECTS OF THE MUSIC CURRICULUM.

The children are protagonists who actively participate in their own musical education. They experience and learn through invention. This approach spurs them to investigate, to choose, to decide and to infer in an independent way. It makes them protagonists of an active musical experience rather than mere recipients of it.