
Introduction

The Orff approach to music education actively involves students in speech, movement, singing, instrument playing, and drama. Developed by the German composer Carl Orff (1895–1982), the approach is based on the instinctive learning behavior of children. Improvisation and movement permeate the learning process, and the use of specially designed Orff instruments enables children to create and perform ensemble music at every level.

The materials used include both folk and composed music, along with chants, rhymes, and poetry. As children experience this music, they develop a musical vocabulary and skills that may then be used to create original works.

Orff orchestrations have been created for selected songs in SPOTLIGHT ON MUSIC. Along with each orchestration are teaching suggestions. The teaching suggestions include:

Instrumentation—All parts except timpani are commonly written in the treble clef. Bass xylophone and bass metallophone sound an octave below the written pitch. Soprano xylophone, soprano metallophone, and alto glockenspiel sound an octave above the written pitch. The soprano glockenspiel sounds two octaves above the written pitch. The alto xylophone and alto metallophone sound at the written pitch.

Teaching the Orchestration—A suggested basic teaching sequence is given for each orchestration. In orchestrations, the bass part is usually the most important. Throughout this book, the rhythm pattern is used to accompany a number of songs. This pattern outlines the length of the musical phrase. If children have difficulty playing this pattern while the song is being sung, have them play the bass pitches on the steady quarter-note beat.

NOTE: It is not expected that children will be able to play the accompanying parts while singing the song, although, in some cases, singing the song makes playing easier.

The teacher may also choose to use only some of the suggested parts, depending on circumstances such as ability of student, time available, or the accessibility of specific instruments. Many of the arrangements can be musically satisfying with only the bass part and one other part added for tone color and/or rhythmic interest.

Parts in Orff orchestrations are commonly taught with children mirroring the teacher, using the body as an instrument. The teacher is, therefore, required to perform many motions “backwards.” To aid in this process, all directions in this book are given from the teacher’s perspective (i.e., right refers to the teacher’s right; children will mirror with the left hand).

Opportunities for Creativity/Improvisation—For each song, strategies are outlined which allow children to make musical decisions and/or improvise rhythmically or melodically.

Form—Suggestions for the final form may include introductions, interludes, codas, chants, and opportunities for improvisation.

Noteworthy—This is a list of important musical elements that can be reinforced with the orchestration.

The Orff approach can infuse music classes with a spirit of cooperation and joy, enabling students to develop concentration and perception skills, increased aesthetic awareness and physical coordination, and a high level of motivation.