

Process: Piece by Piece

Greater Cincinnati Chapter AOSA

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Music for Children, Volume V, #106, p. 90 (Orff & Keetman)

*Coffee is good! Coffee is great!
Coffee is what I need by eight! (fine)
Coffee is good! Coffee is great!
Coffee is what I need by eight!*

Give me the coffee, I need it right now!

DC al fine

A Model Rote (e.g., *Echo*) Process for Teaching Rhythmic Texts, Rhymes, and Poetry

Students often benefit from experiencing a piece as a whole prior to learning its constituent parts. One way to increase attention while listening/experiencing a piece is to guide student listening and analysis for several hearings before echoing individual phrases or sections of the music. For example, when teaching a text such as that presented above, consider asking the students to listen for comprehension (e.g., “What is the text about?”; “What time do I need my coffee by?”; “What words are used to describe my feelings about coffee?”). Additional questions might also focus on drawing inferences (e.g., “How do I feel about my morning coffee and what words tell you this information?”) and/or analysis of structure and form of the piece (e.g., “How many phrases do you hear?”; “What is the sectional form of this piece?”). After each question, model the piece and provide opportunities for students to briefly discuss prior to providing answers to the entire group.

Once students have sufficiently understood the text to be learned, then a “standard” rote process can be employed with the teacher having the students first echo phrase by phrase, then two or more phrases at a time, and finally the whole piece. This is also an excellent time to assess student learning by allowing students to perform the piece in its entirety without teacher assistance.

A Model Process for Transferring Texts to Body Percussion

Once the students have demonstrated they can successfully perform a preparatory text, the teacher may begin gradually adding and developing the body percussion orchestration. In the above piece, the first step was to have the students perform the A phrases by patsching (i.e., patting the legs) the rhythm of the words with no particular attention being given to handedness. Clapping was then added to the rhythm of the B phrase. At this point, the piece may be performed again in unison and/or in canon. The A phrases are then slowly developed by making small changes to the orchestration in ways that hopefully seem both gradual and natural. It is worth noting that the changes introduced are typically modeled by the teacher rather than explained. For this piece the changes were:

1. Beginning each A phrase with the left hand and consistently alternating throughout
2. Performing the eighth-sixteenth-sixteenth motive in the A phrases on the left leg
3. Changing the patsching to clapping on the words “I need by eight!” in the A phrases
4. Changing the clapping in the A phrases to patsch-stamp-stamp on “need by eight”
5. Practice strategies were discussed and time allotted for this purpose
6. Performance of the piece in unison and in canon
7. Performance plan created by the students and the teacher
8. Optional: Body percussion transfer to unpitched percussion instruments or found sounds

Notes:

Erstes Spiel am Xylophon, #45 (Keetman)

The following process plan includes body percussion preparation for singing, instrumental performance, and, to some extent, movement.

- Model the following body percussion piece and ask the students to analyze number of phrases, length of phrases, and form

Snap
Clap
Patsch
Stamp

- Teach through echo imitation (i.e., by rote)
- Perform in unison and in canon
- Have the class sing “do” every time they perform a stamp
- Add a “sol” to the snap
- Add a “mi” to the clap and a “re” to the patsch
- Change the sixth measure to “sol-la-sol”
- Perform in unison and in canon
- In small groups, have the students create dances that have the same “feel” as the body percussion but are gesture based; traveling is allowed, but make sure the dance works in unison and in canon
- Transfer to melody to barred instruments
- Perform in unison and in canon
- Add a broken drone on a BX or timpani (suggested process is modeling the accompaniment pattern first with body percussion and then transfer to xylophone)

- Add a level drone on BM (suggested process is modeling the accompaniment pattern first with body percussion and then transfer to barred instrument)

- Perform in unison and in canon with accompaniment
- Work out a final performance plan

This piece can be adapted to work in other meters (e.g., 2/4, 6/8), in other pentatonic modes (e.g., *la pentatonic*), and/or transposed (e.g., from *do pentatonic on C* to *do pentatonic on F*).

Body Percussion Preparations

As preparatory activities, body percussion pieces and accompaniments are effective tools for teachers to employ when wanting students to have an experience of the rhythm and/or melodic contour of a piece prior to performing it on an instrument. However, students with little experience may require that each piece and/or accompaniment is first introduced in simplified form and developed gradually through “small changes.” The following examples illustrate the simple-to-complex progression for complete pieces as well as accompaniments:

Simple-to-Complex Progression for Body Percussion Piece in 6/8

Version 1

Version 2*

Version 3*

Final Version*

The musical notation for all versions is presented on a single staff with a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4. The first measure contains G4, A4, B4. The second measure contains C5, B4, A4. The third measure contains G4, F4, E4. The staff is labeled 'Snap', 'Clap', and 'Patsch' on the left.

* These versions may all be performed simultaneously, allowing for differentiation of the piece for learners with varied experience and/or skill.

Simple-to-Complex Body Percussion Ostinato Accompaniment



Completed Ostinato



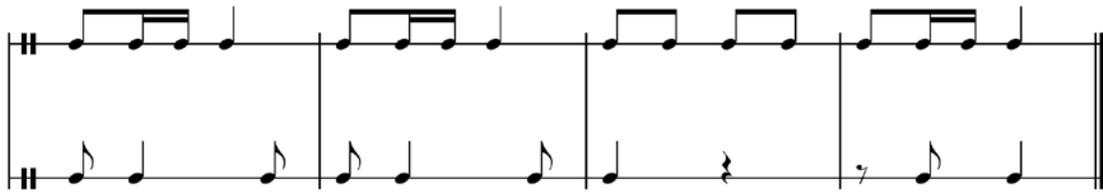
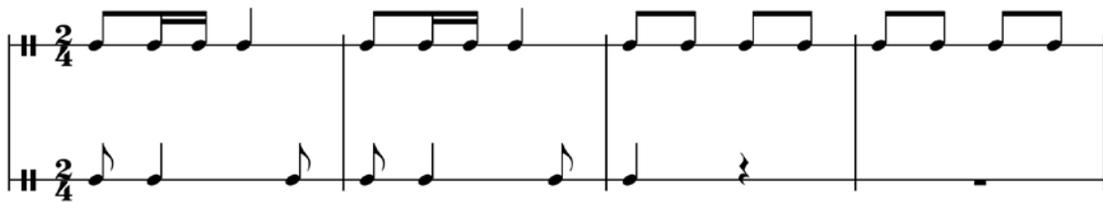
After each change, the accompaniment pattern should be performed with the chant or song before moving to the next step.

Notes:

Speech/Singing Preparations

Speech preparations many times allow students to experience how various parts of a piece relate to each other and fit with the whole for performance. With singing preparations, students also have the opportunity to learn the melody and accompaniments prior to performance on an instrument. When creating texts for speech and singing preparations, careful attention needs to be given to the artistic quality of the words used. This is not to say that all texts must be “serious” as humor works quite well provided it matches the general mood of the piece to be learned. Excellent sources of topics for creating texts can be found in poetry, rhymes, and proverbs.

Music for Children, Volume IV, #6, p. 6 (Orff & Keetman)



Notes:

Simple Movement Preparations

Combining movement and dance pedagogy with aural learning is often an effective strategy for allowing students to experience a piece prior to performing it on an instrument. While there are many ways of providing these experiences, the following lesson illustrates a simple process that relates well to elemental music in simple forms (e.g., *abac* or *abab'*). The overarching focus of the movement preparation is to provide opportunities for students to learn a movement concept, create a choreography emphasizing that concept, and also hear many repetitions of the melody to be performed at a later point.

Movement concept: Locomotor and non-locomotor movement

Music Concept: Form

- Present a list of locomotor and non-locomotor movement words and give time for students to adequately explore them in general space
- Ask students to choose their favorite non-locomotor movement to perform while you perform a rhythm or pulse on the tubano
- Ask the student to choose a second favorite non-locomotor movement to perform while you perform on a tambourine
- Alternate between the first and second movements, cued by the appropriate sounds; gradually refine sound cues to be four beats in length
- Ask students to choose a third favorite non-locomotor movement to perform while you play the suspended cymbal
- Again, alternate between the various movements and sound cues; gradually develop the choreography to be in *abac* form with each section lasting four beats
- Allow time for sharing with partners as time allows
- Perform sound cues in A(*abac*)-B-A(*abac*) form on the unpitched percussion; ask students to perform just the A section (a visual may need to be presented to help student understanding of the form)
- Ask the students to choose their favorite locomotor movement to perform during the B section
- Allow time for practice and then perform all together
- Have students work with a partner, one showing their choreography to the other while accompanied by sound cues; switch performers and share again
- Ask the students to work together to create a new choreography in A(*abac*)-B-A form
- After students are secure in their movement, transition from sound cues to performance of the melody on a recorder, piano, or barred instrument. Allow students to practice and share.
- If time allows, ask students to create a new choreography in A(*abac*)-B-A form with a group of three or more

Layered Ostinati Preparations

Spielbuch für Xylophon II, # 19 (Keetman)

When preparing technically demanding pieces, it is sometimes beneficial to employ a process that provides many opportunities to practice challenging parts as ostinati over which the teacher or other students improvise melodies. The key to this process is to focus on music making, rather than drill.

The image shows four staves of musical notation, each representing a different layer of an ostinato. The staves are labeled on the left as follows:

- SG**: The top staff, containing a melodic line with five notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5.
- AM/BM**: The second staff, containing a melodic line with five notes: A4, B4, C5, D5, E5.
- AX/BX**: The bottom staff, containing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes: A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5.

The notation is in treble clef and includes repeat signs at the end of each staff.

- Teach the layered ostinati above by rote or through notation (or both)
- Once the accompaniment is secure, begin to add teacher and student improvisations
- Provide opportunities for students to perform all three accompaniment patterns as well as improvise (rotate parts and players as appropriate)
- At a later time, review and perform the ostinato patterns in a sequential order (SG→AX/BX→AM/BM), thus creating a melodic skeleton for Keetman xylophone canon
- Develop the melody through a series of small changes till it resembles what is presented in the score
- Teach the B section by rote

Notes:

Recommended Reference Materials:

Calantropio, S. (2004). Process teaching: Finding the elements. *Orff Echo*, 36(4), pp. 28-32.

This article provides an excellent overview of process teaching including repertoire selection, extension activities, and use of questioning to deepen thinking.

Calantropio, S. (2005). *Pieces and Processes*. New York, NY: Schott.

A process teacher's toolbox! This text lists and illustrates many strategies that can be used in designing cohesive lessons that can lead students to a deeper understanding of music through elemental repertoire.

Calantropio, S. (2015). *Lessons in Elemental Style: A Collection of Works with Notes and Suggestions for Further Development and Improvisation*.

Another text by Steve Calantropio illustrating process-based teaching strategies including examples of how to structure improvisatory experiences for students.

Fraze, J. (1998). *Discovering Keetman*. New York, NY: Schott.

This is a "Best Of..." text of Keetman's supplemental materials with process teaching notes. Whether or not you choose to teach the repertoire selected for this book, the process-based teaching examples are invaluable.

McCoy, M. (2011). *I've Got a Song in Baltimore: Folk Songs of North America and the British Isles*. New York, NY: Schott.

A collection of folk arrangements with detailed process-teaching notes.