

Reviewed by **Griff Gall**

Artful-Playful-Mindful in Action

Written by Karen K. Benson, Rachel Bergeron, Leonard Davis, Diana Larsen, and Shelly Smith
New York, NY: Schott, 2015

“We’ll learn by doing, but we learn even more by examining what we have done” (Frazee, 2012, p. vi).

Reflection has been a recurring theme in the writings of Jane Frazee (2012): “Analyzing is the step that takes students from experience to understanding. Although Orff Schulwerk invites learning by doing, I have insisted that there is no wisdom in the doing itself, rather, wisdom is the result of reflection about the doing” (p. 20). In *Artful-Playful-Mindful in Action, Orff-Schulwerk Classroom Projects for a New Generation of Learners*, five Orff Schulwerk teachers in diverse teaching environments created lessons based on Frazee’s Artful-Playful-Mindful approach and explored those lessons with their students. This book demonstrates the curriculum ideas in practice, and provides teacher reflections on each lesson.

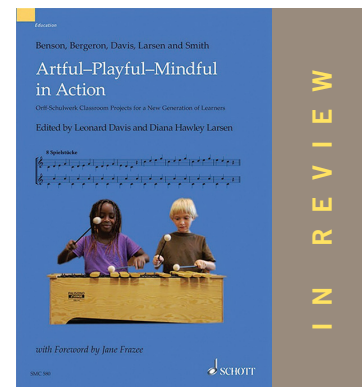
Artful-Playful-Mindful in Action begins with a review of the principles of Frazee’s approach, and then presents 10 three-part project lessons, five focused on rhythmic literacy and five focused on melodic literacy. Each project is clearly explained, and visuals are provided to allow the reader to understand how the lesson was presented. Upon completion, the teacher reflects on the lesson, what made it successful, and how it could be improved going forward. For example, at the end of one rhythmic lesson, Davis

suggests that in the future he would add rhythmic dictation in the mindful portion to assess students’ ability to notate what they hear.

Although assessment in the arts can be a difficult task, those that appear in the mindful sections of the book are practical and meaningful. The authors explore a variety of methods for assessing both technical skills and larger process-based ideas. In a time when administrators are asking for “writing across the curriculum” to take place, *Artful-Playful-Mindful in Action* demonstrates how meaningful writing tasks can lead students to a stronger understanding of the engaging lessons they have experienced. These reflections encourage students to reach a level of understanding by actively engaging with the materials and the process they have experienced, rather than passively experiencing the lesson.

The authors’ lessons are grounded in Orff Schulwerk pedagogy, and encourage teachers to infuse each learning experience with opportunities for students to create or play with new materials.

Artful-Playful-Mindful in Action is an excellent resource for both new and experienced teachers who subscribe to the Orff Schulwerk approach. Although clearly not the intention of this resource, less experienced teachers can easily use the well-written content as “pre-made” lessons, because they are ready to teach as they are presented, and using them as models may help new teachers struggling with creating their curriculum. Experienced educators as well can use this book as a resource to facilitate reflection on their own teaching, especially in the areas of student-led creativity and assessment. The authors’ lessons are grounded in Orff Schulwerk pedagogy, and encourage teachers to infuse each learning experience with opportunities for students to create or play with new materials.



Artful-Playful-Mindful in Action is focused on rhythmic and melodic literacy, and this narrow focus could be seen as a limitation of the book. The structure of the project planning approach, however, can be adapted to present any musical- or movement-based objective. In addition, although the objectives presented are focused on music literacy, the authors explore the concepts using a variety of traditional Orff Schulwerk materials, including movement, singing, speech, and instrumental experiences. Essentially, the overarching objectives of music literacy are providing a focused framework for the musical explorations that occur in an Orff Schulwerk classroom.

This book is a valuable addition to the collection of Orff Schulwerk resources currently available. The educators who collaborated to share their

experiences have provided insight into thoughtful practices that can be applied in a variety of teaching situations. Both novice and experienced music educators can benefit from the classroom projects presented in *Artful-Playful-Mindful in Action*, which would also make an excellent topic for a group discussion with colleagues. ■

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REFERENCES

- Frazer, J. (2012). *Artful-playful-mindful: A new Orff-Schulwerk curriculum for music making and music thinking*. London, England: Schott & Co.

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Anderson University	44	Music Rhapsody	19
AOSA Professional Development Conference	inside back cover	Music Together	31
Beatin' Path	5	Peripole	back cover
George Mason University	15	Quaver	1
Malmark BellCraftsmen	22	SONOR (HOHNER, Inc.)	inside front cover
McGraw Hill	34	Teaching with Orff	7
MMB Music	6	Turner Marimbas	5
MusicFirst.	8	VanderCook College of Music	42
Music Is Elementary	19	West Music	25
		Yamaha	9