

Reviewed by **Martina Vasil**

Artful-Playful-Mindful: A New Orff-Schulwerk Curriculum for Music Making and Music Thinking

By Jane Frazee

New York, NY: Schott Music Corporation, 2012

Less is more. I learned this lesson during my teaching career. As a new teacher, I was stressed and making mistakes, struggling to remember elaborate Orff Schulwerk lessons I was constantly developing. In spite of this, I sensed that my students were not getting as much out of music class as I had hoped. I decided to step back and use less material, but to return to it over the course of several lessons. I found that my students learned better and developed deeper understanding when we revisited pieces several times. The process allowed children to shape, extend, and reflect upon their creations.

This idea of “less is more” stood out as I read Jane Frazee’s new book, *Artful-Playful-Mindful: A New Orff-Schulwerk Curriculum for Music Making and Music Thinking* (Schott: 2012). Using her lifetime of teaching experience, Frazee articulates ideas for a new Orff Schulwerk curriculum. Her Project Model Plan develops both musical skills and literacy in students during music instruction’s brief sessions. By reducing the amount of material introduced to students, deeper music learning occurs. Instead of outlining innumerable lesson plans, Frazee’s curriculum proposes planning a series of ten projects. In her hands, less can certainly be more.

So what exactly does the Project Model Plan look like? The 36-week school year is first trimmed to 30 weeks to accommodate inevitable

schedule interruptions that can keep students out of music class. Next, the process presents 10 projects lasting three weeks each. The first week is dedicated to making music, the second to creating music, and the third to extending and reflecting upon the music created. Each project focuses on a single rhythmic or pitch element that students should be able to demonstrate, play with, and describe.

The Project Model Plan begins in second grade and continues through seventh, although it can extend to older grades. Frazee acknowledges that many musical elements are not explicitly included in her plan. She presumes that teachers will include additional elements as students explore and reflect on their created music. The plan also assumes that movement will be inherent in all Orff Schulwerk classroom activities.

In the first part of the book, the Project Model Plan addresses a common performance trap. When the primary focus is on performing, the teacher overlooks deeper student understanding, expression, and input. By broadening the focus of lessons and allowing more time for creating and analyzing, students develop more ways of thinking and behaving musically.

Frazee suggests three principles to keep in mind when planning lessons: be artful, playful, and mindful. Teachers are encouraged to pick artful, quality pieces that will have a lasting impact on students. Select pieces for their rhythmic and melodic elements, text, length (preferable short), and compatibility to student experiences. She suggests following development psychologist Howard Gardner’s guidelines: artful pieces are interesting, memorable, and invite further encounters.

Frazee also emphasizes the importance of keeping a spirit of play. Three qualities of play are prevalent in Orff Schulwerk. First, lessons are active and not passive. Second, students have a personal stake in their actions and creations, as they do in play. Third, students are typically



a part of a community of music makers, as they are a part of a community during play.

The mindful part of the plan emphasizes student reflection on what they have learned. Often, Orff teachers emphasize making music in the short amount of time they have with students. Here Frazee poses an important question: What good is performing large amounts of music if the students don't understand or hear what they are creating, nor are able to use those ideas in new creations?

Frazee recommends that, in planning your 10 projects, begin with the outcomes you want (mindful), carefully select musical pieces that will lead to those objectives (artful), and provide students with opportunities to play with the material you have chosen (playful).

Frazee demonstrates how the Project Model works in part two of the book. She develops one project each for Grades 2, 4, and 6, walking the reader through each step of the lessons.

In part three, Frazee suggests useful materials. This is not an exhaustive list of possibili-

ties, but simply suggestions and materials that worked for music teachers who tested lessons in the book. The materials are short and simple, keeping with the book's spirit.

Artful-Playful-Mindful offers a classroom-tested music curriculum built on rhythm and pitch elements that will fit into today's time-restricted, standards-based educational systems. I think this book is essential for Orff Schulwerk teachers who want to make as deep of an impact as possible in the little time allotted for music instruction. Frazee provides a useful and succinct guide for teachers to do more with less. ■

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