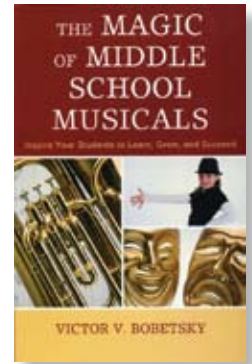


The Magic of Middle School Musicals: Inspire Your Students to Learn, Grow, and Succeed

By Victor V. Bobetsky
Rowman and Littlefield Education, 2008



The *Magic of Middle School Musicals: Inspire Your Students to Learn, Grow, and Succeed* by Victor V.

Bobetsky offers beginning teachers a foundation of information upon which to base plans to produce a middle school musical. Detailed information is offered in every chapter, beginning with the selection of the show and carrying the reader all the way through the final assessment matched with a cross-curricular unit of study.

Bobetsky begins “at the beginning, a very good place to start” with Chapter 1, “Select Your Show.” He states that there are three basic criteria to consider in creating a musical for middle school students: (1) the music needs to be vocally feasible for a middle school student, (2) the plot and characters need to be of interest, and (3) the musical should have the potential to involve teachers from other subject areas.

Middle school students are in the unique situation of not wanting to do anything too childish; however, they are not ready to delve into many of the topics explored in contemporary musicals (and they should not yet be exposed to these topics). Selection of topically and musically appropriate material is critical, and the author lays out careful guidelines for making the experience a success for everyone.

Bobetsky then expands upon the ideas of selecting appropriate material by outlining the creation of a unit of study that includes several subject areas. Do not fear that this will all fall on the musical director. The author outlines ways to involve other teachers, and he even includes a section titled “Ideas for Objectives and Assessment by Subject Area”

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for the teachers of each subject to read. These paragraphs include suggestions for integration of each subject, a format for objectives, and how to accomplish each objective.

While the chapter on arranging music for middle school voices is a little spare on detail, the information included is a valuable start to help those just entering the world of middle school musicals. Bobetsky discusses vocal range considerations and gives useful advice on how to address the changing male voice in arrangements. Further suggestions help to create interesting arrangements within the limitations of vocal range and skill level of the age group.

In addition, great sources of detailed information pertaining to every aspect of putting on a musical from auditioning and casting to organization, scheduling, and master planning are included in this book. The author further delivers many helpful hints and ideas on acting, stage crew, choreography, scenery, set

design, costumes, makeup, and lighting. Checklists, sample forms, and letters are included (so you do not have to create everything yourself). What teacher doesn’t appreciate a time-saver like this?

If the creative bug does bite you, the section called “Create an Original Musical” is especially for you. Suggestions for both writing your own musical or, more importantly to Orff Schulwerk teachers, how to involve students in the creative process are spelled out in this chapter.

The book concludes with “Assess the Unit of Study” and explores how to evaluate student achievement and the success of the program. This part of the unit may end up being the most valuable to your program because it provides a way to justify all the time, energy, and expense that goes into producing a middle school musical.

For those new to middle school, or even veteran teachers looking for fresh ideas, this book is a an excellent place to start to gain some insight before committing to the enormous undertaking of producing a musical with middle school students. This book has many helpful bits of information inserted in the midst of details that less experienced teachers will find crucial. Bobetsky addresses so many of the issues involved that one often discovers the hard way—even veteran teachers will find it invaluable. *The Magic of Middle School Musicals* is a great place to start when you are ready to journey down the path to producing a middle school musical. ■

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