

STUDENT REFLECTIONS ON THE PACHELBEL UNIT

The students in the class were seen as bright kids interested in music, yet designated as learning challenged in math and language arts. The Musical Matrix unit became a prototype intervention where music and storytelling (the adventures of a musician getting lost in Europe) activated music integration learning experiences.

When asked to name “things that you have learned, relearned, would like to know,” students did not typically limit their responses to a single discipline. It was not uncommon to get responses that blended the concept of music reading and understanding math such as:

“I learned about musical notation and the coordinates, too.”

“I relearned the do re mi and beats and to get at the right time.”

“I want to know more about coordinates and beats.”

Virtually all the students indicated that the problem solving aspects of the units were the most fun, particularly when “we were finding Ken, and Major Scale was helping us.” Looking over additional samples provides a window into these students’ growing curiosity about new ways to explore music, music-math-geographic coordinates, Europe, and Ken the traveling musician.

“I was learning to use musical notation and to help Ken and find Ken’s way.”

“I relearned how the use musical notation.”

“I would like to know about the coordinates that Ken was in.”

“I learned music notation and the scale and the coordinates.”

“I learned that Stuttgart was in Europe, Cologne was in Europe, and Dusseldorf, too.”

“I relearned traditional musical notes and London is the capital of England.”

“I want to know more about Europe.”

“I want to know more about Ken.”

“I had fun writing a letter to Ken.”

When challenged to come up with more types of assessment for the lesson, Dee responds, “Now the students will have a much better time playing the ‘Battleship game’ actually knowing what the coordinates are during the course of the game!”

SUMMARY

In the model building phase of the Learning Through Music Project, standards were set for design, teaching, and documenting the work of teachers, music teachers, orchestra members, and LTM consultants all focused on the Pen-Pal concerts with the orchestra. In terms of the RUBRICS CUBE evaluation frameworks, the design quality of the LTM units increased in terms of design specificity, adherence to LTM principles, and relevance to the Ramsey School music and academic curriculum. Baseline standards for quality of student work documentation also were established.

The next section of this Case Study Report focuses on an LTM approach to one of the most successful music residency projects found in public schools today: creating original opera.

THE FOURTH GRADE OPERA-MAKING CURRICULUM AT THE RAMSEY SCHOOL

A Music-in-Education Approach
Dee Lundell, Corey Sevett, and Larry Scripp

OPERA MAKING AND THE MIENC

In 1983, the Metropolitan Opera Guild received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to develop a professional development program for

Creating Original Opera based on a residency model that began in 1977. In the *Champions of Change* report over 10 years ago, Dennie Wolf reported that learning outcomes in creating original opera programs were focused on language arts acquisition, higher forms of reasoning and reflection that emerged in the opera-making process, and community building. [Wolf 1999].

After joining the MIENC, the Guild has evolved beyond the Creating Original Opera model [previously reported in the *Journal for Learning Through Music* 2003] and has developed a new program called the “Research and Professional Development Opera Institute,” of which a New York based LLSN school (PS 10 in Brooklyn) is a part. Far from the ‘add water and stir’ approach to curriculum implementation programs in the past, the Guild’s ‘creating opera’ programs are now in line with the music-in-education models of program dissemination practices that build opera making into the context of authentic, comprehensive, and interdisciplinary music teaching and learning practices. As a result of joining the MIENC, the Guild’s leadership took a serious look at all their programming in terms of higher education guided intern programs and research-assessment models for music and music-integrated teaching and learning. Today spin-offs of the creating opera residencies have become commonplace in schools dedicated to arts learning and often function as a centerpiece of interdisciplinary music learning.

From the MIENC perspective, the most important developments are those that continue to build evidence-based assessment practices into the school opera-making residencies. Following this case study report, Carroll Rinehart poses research questions for creating opera programs stemming from his vast experience in many areas of the country, such as the “Music! Words! Opera!” program used by the Opening Minds Through the Arts program in Arizona [see “Creating Opera in Schools: Music as a Model for Integrated Learning”].

In the Consortium Learning Laboratory Schools, researchers and faculty at PS10 are

looking at issues of pre-literacy and student self-esteem as learners, and Long Island City High School is focusing on reflective thinking, creativity, and life skill preparation for the students involved in secondary school opera classes. The Ramsey School LLSN team has developed their own creating opera program, now guided by Learning Through Music curriculum-assessment consultants and currently focused on social studies and a wide range of “music literacy-language literacy” connections.

TRACING THE EXPANDING ROLE OF OPERA MAKING THROUGH THE DIGITAL PORTFOLIO SYSTEM

In the Learning Laboratory School Network the RUBRICS CUBE based digital portfolio system serves as an interactive presentation device for communicating complex program development and its impact to peer schools. The slides selected

from the project section (green slides) below provide a visually and aurally (some of the screen artifacts activate QuickTime movie files) illustrated narrative understanding of the fourth grade opera program, a project that has evolved over many years at the Ramsey School.

The first slide sets the stage for understanding how the creative process of

making opera in schools fits into the Learning Through Music program development guidelines. Not surprisingly, the project embraces academic and artistic goals simultaneously in the form of the study of human migration and the power of the voice to express this understanding through storytelling, songwriting, and the production of an opera as a public demonstration of this understanding.

THE PROJECT EMBRACES ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC GOALS SIMULTANEOUSLY IN THE FORM OF THE STUDY OF HUMAN MIGRATION AND THE POWER OF THE VOICE TO EXPRESS THIS UNDERSTANDING THROUGH STORYTELLING, SONGWRITING, AND THE PRODUCTION OF AN OPERA AS A PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION OF THIS UNDERSTANDING.

THE RAMSEY OPERA PROJECT DIGITAL PORTFOLIO SLIDE SHOW EXHIBIT

Fourth Grade Opera 2006 – Project Description

The 4th grade has created and performed an opera for the last 9 years. In the past, opera has been used as a vehicle to demonstrate student learning and a social studies topic. In 2005-06, with support of Learning Through Music consultants, students began learning about opera as an art form before creating and performing their opera.

All 100+ 4th grade students are involved in all aspects of the creation and performance: developing the story, writing the lyrics, helping compose the music, designing and creating the sets, props and costumes, advertising, performing and critiquing the opera.

Curriculum Goals: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of why people migrate through the opera creation and performance. Students will be able to demonstrate the power of voice after learning about opera as an art form.

Staff involved in the program include: 4th-grade teachers Ann Blatti, Sally Scott and Jennifer Vaillancourt; strings teacher Stacy Aldrich; music and theater visiting artists Carolyn Pratt, Maureen Koelsch, Chris Griffith and Sonya Berlovitz, and LTM consultants Dee Lundell and Corey Sevett.

The opera project overview stresses the evolution of opera making at Ramsey from purely academic curriculum connections toward including a focus on music content understanding and skill development.

As the digital portfolio progresses, the pop up menu bar illustrates how the goals of the opera project are transformed into an expanding set of inquiry questions that guide the development of the project from the learner's viewpoint. Guided inquiry questions such as those listed here became the driving forces behind the development of the opera project. Assessment questions focused also on the nature of setting text to music, a topic that connected this project to other music writing projects at Ramsey, including the Setting Odes to Music project already in place in the third grade classrooms.

Slide 2

Fourth Grade Opera – Inquiry Questions

Inquiry questions:

- What is the power of voice?
- Why do, what are the causes for, people moving from one region of the United States to another region?
- How will learning about and using opera as an art form increase and enhance the students' understanding of the 'power of voice' and the reasons people move?

The elaborate storyboard in this portfolio page captures the student's understanding of aspects of human migration as storytelling. Additionally, the storyboard illustrates the quality and purpose of data collection and analysis of student work in the context of the opera making projects.

Fourth Grade Opera – Student Work

As part of the process of developing the story for the opera, students created 8-cell story boards by themselves or with partners. They then presented the stories to the classes. All the regions of the country, reasons for moving, characters in the family, were collated. The teachers ruled out the violent reasons for moving and the 4th graders voted on their top ideas. The disaster reasons received the most votes. After settling on 3 major disasters, students began large group activities developing the characters, plot, and lyrics.

Storyboard

Fourth Grade Opera – Process Documentation

As the opera program has developed into a year-long project, a curriculum and assessment scope and sequence is needed for both teaching opera as an art form and social studies content as well as the plan for creating and performing the opera. As the team experiences and reflects on the project, new items are added to the scope and sequence.

4 TH GRADE OPERA CURRICULUM PLAN – Working Document					
Time line	Activity	Purpose/goal	Things need to be done to execute	Who's in charge?	Document Media
Aug	Bakken workshop	Workshop storytelling & science; offerings from Bakken	Attend	4 th teachers	
Sept	4 th grade team meet with consultants	To determine the calendar and events for the opera program; To write the essential questions; To determine the assessments; To discuss the portfolio and things that will need to be done; To determine the layout of the Journal; To plan cross class curriculum integration between strings and 4 th grade	Set up meeting(s) time(s) to do this; includes 4 th grade teachers, Corey, Dee, Stacy, Jana? - contact Carolyn Pratt - set up date for presentation	Dee	Photos of team planning
Pre Thurs. musical	Pre-Assessment – what do you know about opera? Begin Journal	To document growth in knowledge To begin to document the entire process of the opera program	- written based on the question we want answered; - Journal needs to be developed		
Early Oct	- Set topic for opera - begin development of potential stories;	To have a better timeline for the opera; To separate story development from lyric writing for the opera; To practice story telling beginning, middle and end To introduce the elements of opera	- team has to decide on topic;	team students Thurs. Musical	Video and pix

This slide demonstrates a commitment to action research as an ongoing investigative process of the inquiry questions. The documentation sheet embedded in the slide captures the purposeful as well logistical aspects of project development guided by the LTMCG consultants. The LTMCG project development and management process documentation sheet helped teachers revise their planning process from year to year.

Fourth Grade Opera – Assessment Instrument

The team wanted to know how much the students knew about opera before beginning the unit. All students completed a pre-opera questionnaire. These were evaluated by counting the number of ingredients the student identified.

Before the students began creating their own opera, students completed another questionnaire about what they had learned so far.

Finally, after their performance, students completed an essay.

Dr. Dee Lundell, the LTMCG academic consultant, created multiple assessments for capturing and evaluating student learning in the opera project. Seen here is a sample student open-ended guided response assessment instrument developed for the opera project. This portfolio page reveals a clear conception of opera making as a collaborative process that requires attention to details of rhythm and rhyme in composition and ensemble performance.

Collecting individual student and group composition work samples is a critical strategy for evaluating the music literacy connections to opera making learning goals in music. Student engagement in the composing process takes many forms in the opera project. The artifacts in this portfolio page suggest how the brainstorming process and the final collection of verses for the 'Hurricane Blues' became part of the opera.

Fourth Grade Opera – Student Work

Hurricane
 Mean uncle
 5 kids
 Baby
 Cousin
 Friend
 Child
 Child #2

Summer to Fall
 August-October
 Hot
 Humid

Hurricane headed for Louisiana
 Evacuate to leave an area
 Evacuation Highway- All traffic goes in one direction

Musical Score and Lyrics – "Hurricane Blues"
 The songs were written by the students both to tell the story and to reflect the musical heritage of the region in which the story is set. The hurricane story was set in New Orleans and inspired blues and jazz music.

Groups of students worked on the ideas from brainstorming the story to writing the lyrics. Once the songs were written, students were given the songs in traditional notation as well as on CD to help them learn the melodies and memorize the lyrics before rehearsals.

HURRICANE BLUES

1. It was the worst nightmare we've ever had. Oh my goodness, it was really bad. Our rescue took a couple of days. After we were rescued, we were in a thankful mood.
2. Grandma, mom and baby get to go first. Me and kids will wait, this is the worst. Our rescue took a couple of days. After we were rescued, we were in a thankful mood.
3. To get out of New Orleans, we rode on a train, Crowded and noisy, oh, what a pain. Our rescue took a couple of days. After we were rescued, we were in a thankful mood.
4. They took us to Texas, a city called Galveston. But it was too crowded, there was no more room. Our rescue took a couple of days, After we were rescued, we were in a thankful mood.
5. Hundreds of people, what a mess! And then we had to get on a bus. Our rescue took a couple of days. After we were rescued, we were in a thankful mood.
6. We can't stay here. We've got to go ta. We're on our way to Minnesota. Let's start our life brand new! I bet that hurricane is going into the Hall of Fame.

Fourth Grade Opera – Assessment Instrument

Students completed a post performance critique.

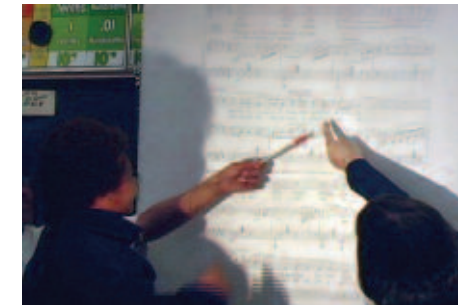
OPERA PERFORMANCE CRITIQUE	
Name: <u>Quadalice</u>	Date: <u>6/19/06</u>
Please complete the following self-assessment/critique on your own and the group's performance in the opera. Explain your observation.	
CHORUS Where (on what songs) did you perform particularly well? Why? <u>I did well on almost all of the songs. I did well with the closing song, hurricane blues and more.</u>	Where do you think you could have done better? Why? <u>I could have done better with the final disaster song and the earth quake song.</u>
Where (on what songs) did the group perform particularly well? Why? <u>Well, I think they did well in the closing songs, hurricane blues song, and tornado song.</u>	Where do you think the group could have done better? Why? <u>I think they could have done better in the closing song.</u>
Where did you sing clearly and loudly? Why? <u>I sang clearly and loudly in song Tornado Song. I sang it clearly and loudly.</u>	Where could you have sung more loudly and clearly? Why? <u>I could have sang more clearly and loudly in Earthquake Song, because I didn't get it.</u>
Where did the group sing clearly and loudly? Why? <u>I think they sang clearly and loudly in Tornado Song.</u>	Where could the group have sung more loudly and clearly? Why? <u>They could have sang clearly and loudly in Earthquake Song, because we didn't practice it.</u>
MOVEMENT What part of the disaster force did you do particularly well? Why? <u>I think I did good in my part Tornado, because I practiced alot.</u>	What part of the disaster force do you think you could have done better? Why? <u>NO where.</u>
What part of the disaster force did the group do particularly well? Why? <u>I think the Hurricane group did well, because I liked it.</u>	What part of the disaster force do you think the group could have done better? Why? <u>I can't think of any.</u>

Opera project post-performance critique sheet captures stages of reflective thinking with regard to performance aspects of the project. The post-critique assessments revealed the extent to which students were able to discern and reflect on multiple aspects of the opera performance.

EVIDENCE OF STUDENT REFLECTIVE UNDERSTANDING OF OPERA

Ramsey's mission, "To engage all students' passion for learning in and through the arts," is fully embodied in the opera program, with learning activities in lyric and music writing and in costume, set and prop design and construction. All the 4th grade students take part in all aspects of opera production. Lessons take place throughout the school year and culminate in a 4-week period of intensive writing, rehearsing, and performance.

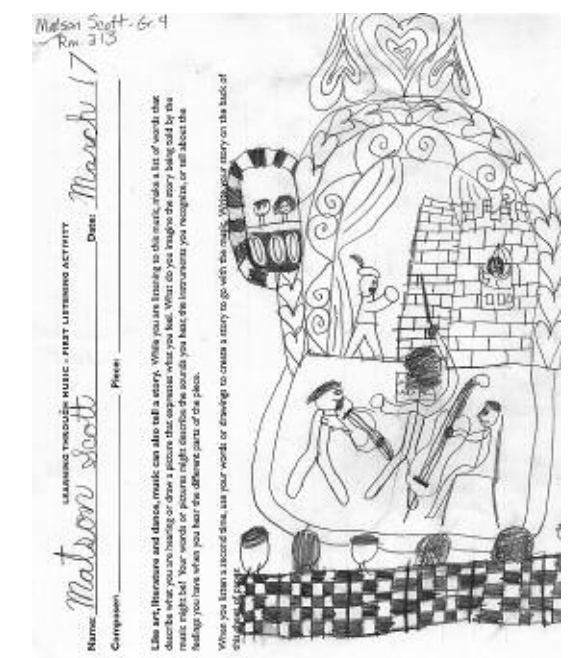
Teaching opera as an art form has become a more extensive component of the 4th grade opera project. Before the writing of the opera begins in the spring, students experience a number of lessons and field trips and work with visiting artists and the Kenwood pen pals. Activities include presentations by opera singers and a costume designer; a tour of the Minnesota Opera facilities; lessons on setting text to music with a visiting composer; "Ode" writing; attending an opera performance; and analysis of previous years' opera productions.



A Kenwood Orchestra Pen Pal and teaching partner point out details of a projected score from Puccini's 'La Bohème' for a fourth grade Learning Through Music unit on patterns in music and math.



A student illustrates the final scene from Puccini's 'La Bohème' where 'Mimi is dead and people are standing around her.' Another student states in an interview that the 'slow music sounds beautiful, like the Pachelbel Canon only with voices.'



A highly detailed and expressive student drawing submitted as a reflection on opera after seeing a live opera performance.

**SUMMARY:
OPERA LEARNING
AND THE PRINCIPLE
OF DIFFERENTIATION
AND SYNTHESIS**

The digital portfolios make clear that the opera project is aligned with the MIENC principle that “a comprehensive music program assumes its full power in education through the dynamic tension between music as a distinct authentic subject area and as part of a rich curriculum integrated with other subject areas.” Thus, opera study and opera making serve as a medium and model for arts-integrated learning through music.

The portfolio examples also demonstrate alignment with national and district standards for both music and social studies. The fourth grade opera program is a year-long project with two strands of curriculum, opera as an art form and social studies. These two strands are taught separately and then integrated by students creating and performing an opera based on the broad social studies topic of ‘Regions in the United States,’ a topic that was of considerable interest to students due to their awareness of people needing to move from New Orleans to Minnesota because of Hurricane Katrina.

The underlying RUBRICS CUBE sequence ensures that student learning is well documented and assessed, and that teachers have multiple opportunities for reflection on the design and implementation of the unit as well as on its value to the school and its professional cultures. Through engagement in all aspects of this project, students come to understand that opera has a particularly rich tradition of addressing fundamental social issues while combining various art forms such as storytelling through musical composition and performing, which also depend on acting and movement and costume, set, and lighting design. Students also experience integrated learning by paying attention to fundamental concepts of social studies, language arts, and music literacy skill development. Through documentation and assessment practices, student work and assessment data in the Ramsey portfolio provided multiple ways of demonstrating learning and competencies.

AN EXAMPLE OF STUDENT SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS

Following the RUBRICS CUBE sequence from documentation to analysis of student work to test results, the following chart is an example of the data tallied over the year on students' progress of learning and their ability to identify the “ingredients” needed for an opera. These data summarize results from both the beginning-year pre-questionnaire and end-year essays. The teachers were able to use the data to reflect on the effectiveness of instruction and problems with consistency in individual assessment measures. Results indicate significant changes in knowledge about opera as an art form as the unit progressed.

Pre Opera Program Questionnaire

Average # of ingredients	1.2	Average percentage	9.0%
Range of ingredients	0-3.5	Range of percentage	0-26.9%
Median of ingredients	1.0	Median of percentage	7.7%

Post Opera Program Questionnaire

Average # of ingredients	4.2	Average percentage	31.9%
Range of ingredients	1.5-9	Range of percentage	7.7-69.2%
Median of ingredients	4.0	Median of percentage	30.8%

Tabulation of questionnaire results regarding knowledge of the structural components of opera making.



The final performance served as a culminating learning activity.

READING TO THE BEAT

A Learning Through Music-Language Arts Curriculum Intervention

Jennifer Vaillancourt and Dee Lundell

In music-in-education laboratory schools, it is not unexpected that teachers and consultants invent new ways to incorporate music into the curriculum. In this case, Jennifer Vaillancourt, Sandi Likely, and LTM Consultant Dee Lundell initiated a pilot study focused on the effects of music for Ramsey’s most challenged third grade readers.

THE PROBLEM

Some students arrive in third grade at Ramsey without having mastered high frequency/sight words. This interferes with fluent reading and affects their comprehension. They are identified as struggling readers and need a major intervention to catch up with grade level reading skills. The students demonstrate disfluent, choppy oral reading. There is little to no automaticity in their reading and thus no smooth “flow.”

THE INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- How can music be used to actively engage the students in learning and developing automaticity of high frequency/sight words that will increase their reading fluency?
- More specifically, will using rhythmic beats using rhythm sticks and taiko drums increase the fluency of sight/high frequency words?
- What is the effect of drumming in a circle?

**THE LEARNING THROUGH MUSIC PLAN:
A DRUM CIRCLE/RHYTHM STICK/WORD FLUENCY INTERVENTION**

STEP 1: Identify concepts and processes shared between language reading and music

Because the classroom teacher, Jennifer Vaillancourt, and special education teacher

COMMENTS ON THE OPERA PROJECT FROM THE RAMSEY TEACHERS

Most of Ramsey’s teachers bring their classes to the opera performance. Comments from classroom teachers, music teachers, and parents (Figure 50) reinforce the value of the program from the whole-school perspective (RUBRICS CUBE Rubric 7):

“I take my students every year to see the 4th grade Opera because they get excited to see what they’re going to be doing next year.”
--3rd grade teacher

“I notice my kids know a lot about Minnesota history because that was the topic of their opera the previous year.”
--5th grade teacher

“This year’s was the best ever. Really liked the balance of singing, dancing, solos...and the sets were fantastic. First time ever that strings were incorporated. It was apparent in this opera that all kids had both chorus and stage time.”
-- Spanish Fine Arts teacher:

“Really liked the involvement of all the students. Didn’t remember that we had that many involved in the past... Could understand all the words. Very well done.”
-- Music teacher:

“Greatest yet. Loved the involvement of all the students. Noted the positive climate between audience and students.”
-- Another Music teacher:

“Congrats. I had a great discussion with my students about natural disasters following the opera and found that my students didn’t know much about earthquakes.”
--5th grade teacher:

“I didn’t bring my video camera because I thought it would be just another kid’s school performance. This was so much more. I regretted not having my camera, but now that I know the school has a DVD of the performance, I’m definitely buying one.”
--4th grade parent:

“I can’t wait until I’m in 4th grade so I can be in the opera.”
-- Younger sibling of 4th-grader

Student, classroom teacher, and music teacher comments on the Ramsey Opera project.

and taiko drummer, Sandi Likely, were part of the LTM project, they decided to design an intervention by looking at the concepts, processes and skills shared between music and language reading to design lessons for increasing the fluency of sight/high frequency words.

Students lacking word fluency skills read slowly, a word at a time, often pausing between words or phrases; they make frequent mistakes, ignore punctuation marks, and read in a monotone. Fluent readers know the words automatically and therefore move easily from word to word.

Thus, the collaborative team found that skilled music performance and proficient sight word reading skills share the following concepts and qualities:

- *Rhythm:* movement, flow; characterized by regular recurrence of beat, accent
- *Tempo:* the speed at which a task is performed with a good pace and with phrasing and expression; rate of activity, timing
- *Fluency:* flowing smoothly; ease in speaking, performing, problem solving