

## Review of Orff Schulwerk: Definition, Constructs, and Significance

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**Abstract:** Orff Schulwerk was proposed by Carl Orff (1895-1982) as a music teaching method tailored for children, teenagers and adults. The main idea of Orff's method is that every child should have the right to feel the beauty of music, whether he has excellent musical talent or not. Generally speaking, Orff Schulwerk's teaching strategy is to carry out classroom teaching in a group mode, and complete the effective learning process by singing, speaking, exercising, hitting the body and playing musical instruments. The elements in Orff Schulwerk's creation are not only "sound" or "voice", but also dance and musical instruments. They combine the positive innate performance of children at different stages of development. This primary school curriculum enhances children's imagination and brings conditions for children's emotional extension.

### 1. Introduction

Orff Schulwerk (school work) was proposed by Carl Orff (1895-1982) as a music teaching approach tailored for children, teenagers and adults. From 1924 to 1936, Carl Orff put forward the main ways of adult music teaching at Munich University. The idea is to summarize his own teaching experience in music education and his cooperation with Dorothy Günther (1896-1975). Dorothee Günther is an excellent dancer from Germany (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995). At the beginning, the audience who used Orff Schulwerk to complete their studies were middle-aged and high-aged students. After that, the teaching strategy was adjusted to meet the learning needs of young children. The main idea of Orff's method is that every child should have the right to feel the beauty of music, whether or not he has excellent musical talent (Li et al., 2011). Generally speaking, Orff Schulwerk's teaching strategy is to teach in class by means of group mode, and to complete the effective learning process by means of singing, speaking, sports, body striking and musical instrument playing (Mason, 2008). Based on this, the elements in Orff Schulwerk's creation are not only "voice" or "sound", but also dance and musical instruments. They combine the positive innate performance of children in various stages of development. This primary school course strengthens children's imagination and brings conditions for children's emotional extension (Steen, 1992).

One of the main meanings of this teaching strategy is to enable children to have the ability to perform music by themselves. Orff Schulwerk integrates language, singing, action and musical instruments, and strengthens children's beliefs, music appreciation and creation of art through music teaching and appreciation activities (Orff & Kidman, 1982).

### 2. Constructs

One of the main connotations of this teaching strategy is to make children have the ability to create music independently. Orff Schulwerk combines language, singing, sports and musical instruments, and strengthens children's self-confidence and musical level by means of musical behavior (Orff & Keetman, 1982).

Speech. The cultivation of language ability includes rhythm, texture, tone, color, structure and expression. It is the foundation of cultivating children's musical ability in Orff-Schulwerk teaching strategy (Li et al., 2011). Children's daily life is to communicate with their peers and their parents normally. Teachers guide students to complete the speech training with rhythm, and use it to teach students words, and then adjust the words to different rhythms, which are similar to the rhythm

characteristics of nursery rhymes. Teachers will be able to incorporate accompaniment into rhythmic language expressions, such as playing piano, clapping, drumming or digital music.

**Singing.** By filling the rhythm tune with language, you can complete the creation of songs. Teachers' dreams can help Orff's teaching strategies to guide children to complete their performances by singing local folk songs (Chang, 2006). With this method, children's emotional level will be effectively strengthened. Students show and analyze their emotions, such as happiness, sadness, pride and love, based on the emotions and rich connotations of music and language (Li et al., 2011).

**Movement.** In the presentation of musical works, the rhythm of music, the length and type of language can be expressed by the behavior of limbs. In Orff-Shuerwoker's teaching strategy, the body improvisation has high freedom and can be created by itself, so the acquired skills and behavior habits will show positive significance in the music creation and the on-the-spot performance of musical instruments (Li et al., 2011).

There are differences between sports and dancing. Dancing is mainly to complete some technical movements and show the dancer's own emotions, while the sports behavior in Orff's teaching is an activity that allows children to explore the charm of music more freely (Li et al., 2011). Sports behaviors can be added to other behaviors, such as singing or performing musical instruments. Teachers will be able to guide students to arrange creative behaviors in various shapes in the classroom, so that children can finish walking, running, jumping, hands-on and jumping along with the rhythm of music (Li et al., 2011).

**Orff instruments.** The basic instruments used in Orff classroom are different instruments with cross bars. Bars are all kinds of percussion instruments based on wooden sticks or metal sticks. Students can play musical instruments with special mallets, such as xylophone, metal piano and Glock piano. Generally speaking, it is not too difficult for children to play these pieces of music, because teachers often guide children to perform a repeated melody pattern ostinato in instrumental ensemble. Furthermore, the b and f sections can be deleted, and the other sections can form pentatonic scale. In this way, children can avoid playing discordant melody.

### **3. Significance**

According to Orff Shurwak's idea, students' music learning begins with listening and imitating. Then, improvisation will also cover it. Orff's idea is that music originates from nature and is closely related to the expression of language and behavior (Orff and Kittmann, 1982). Orff's music teaching does not attach importance to the study of music skills or theoretical knowledge. Under his idea, feeling the connotation of music is the focus of children's early music learning. Students need to experience the connotation of music with creative improvisation.

Moreover, Orff Schulwick is regarded as a means of music therapy when finishing experiments with children or adults with psychological problems or physical disabilities. Orff (1989) gave examples and main processes of Orff's music therapy. It includes the concept of behavior and imitation in client-therapist communication. Clinical cases bring important opportunities for psychologists and educators to analyze the therapeutic effect of Orff's method as a way of music therapy. Orff (1989) clarified that children's learning in different subjects is like "lock", and Orff's learning method is to explore the "key". Children look for keys and explore knowledge of various disciplines with the help of musical behavior. The research shows that Orff's teaching strategy has positive significance to the cultivation of children's mental health. Dezfoolian et al. (2013) launched a pilot analysis to clarify the effect of Orff music therapy on autistic children's social behavior, interpersonal communication and repeated behavior. Through the results, it can be seen that the children's social behavior and interpersonal communication skills after Orff music therapy have been strengthened, and the students' repetitive behaviors have been reduced.

Yun&Kim (2013) used Orff's teaching strategy to explain the psychological behavior of children from low-income families. The author completed a test based on Orff's music teaching, and tested the level of self-presentation, self-efficacy and social ability of participants in the experimental group and the control group. The research shows that these characteristics of the children in the

experimental group have been effectively improved after 16 weeks of experiment.

#### **4. Conclusions**

According to Orff Suvak, students' music learning begins with listening and imitating. Then, improvisation will also cover it. Orff's idea is that music originates from nature and is closely related to the expression of language and behavior. With the help of music behavior, children find the key and explore the knowledge of various disciplines. After Orff's music therapy, children's social behavior and interpersonal skills have been strengthened, and students' repetitive behaviors have been reduced.

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