

# Kodály Educators of Iowa



February 2011

## From the President ~ Kris VerSteegt



I don't know what kind of calendar you're on, but I am quickly approaching the deadline for second trimester report cards.

So I am knee-deep in assessments right now: Assessments which demonstrate my students' abilities to distinguish patterns aurally, take dictation, read and perform rhythm patterns with body percussion, match intervals, demonstrate handsigns, label solfège from staff notation then sing it aloud correctly, assign absolute pitch names, play classroom instruments independently and with good technique, classify instruments of the band and orchestra, and sing in-tune. Whew!

Much of this assessment is authentic, formative, and happens in real-time—the kind of information I would gather anyway as I plan for instruction. But occasionally I get the feeling that I am spending so much time *weighing the pigs*, there is no time to *feed the pigs*. Worse yet, given that the rest of my elementary music team and I will compare our data, I feel almost compelled to spend even more time shoving in tons of high-fat activities that will help my short-term data, but not really affect my students long-term understanding. All the while, I suspect I might be missing the real meat of what makes my kids better musicians. In other

words: *Where's the beef?*

The beef is, I think, in the music. If I do a whole bunch of inauthentic formative assessments that don't come from real music or move to real music, I miss the chance to make powerful, authentic connections. But, if I select patterns for assessment that occur in repertoire which I am teaching anyway, it will be easier for me to practice those patterns in a meaningful, more lasting way.

That is not to say that my students shouldn't be able to transfer their knowledge. It is my job to help them move from what is known to what is unknown and see if, by context, they have the skills to independently figure out those unknowns. For example, my students should be able to read and play a measure made up entirely of 16th notes, but should I spend my time drilling that pattern when it doesn't appear in any song in my collection?

Should my teaching be more about *the theory or the practice*? The truth is: Those pigs are going to grow. They are going to eat up whatever I feed them. If I feed them a steady diet of authentic activities and assessments, they will grow to be strong musicians. If I give them junk that doesn't meet their nutritional needs... Well, they'll just get fat.

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## Kudos to...

Kris VerSteegt was a featured presenter at an inservice for Des Moines music teachers. She presented many of the things she does with manipulatives. Kris will also present the Friday night session for the May IMEA weekend workshop. Way to go, Kris!

Congratulations to Dr. Sylvia Munsen who has accepted a position at Utah State. Our chapter is so grateful for all the work she has done with us over the past years including hosting many workshops at ISU, encouraging students to explore the Kodály philosophy and presenting several times at workshops and chapter sharings. We will miss her very much and wish her the best as she begins this exciting new chapter!

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## Winter Sharing

Thanks to everyone who helped make the sharing a success. We had 17 in attendance, including 3 students and one first-year teacher. A great time was had by all!

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## First Iowa Orff

Mark your calendars for FIO's spring workshop which will feature Artie Almeida on April 9.

## Greater Des Moines AOSA Workshop

The Des Moines Orff Chapter presents ***Movement with Meaning*** with Aaron Hansen on February 26 from 9am-1pm at Samuelson Elementary (3929 Bel Aire Road, DSM). Aaron Hansen is a K-6 music teacher in the Waverly-Shellrock school district. He has both bachelors and masters degrees from UNI and did his Orff levels and master class at the University of St. Thomas. He has presented workshops in Iowa, and his Orff ensembles have appeared at national conferences. This workshop will focus on using movement activities and traditional folk dance. Participants will also learn how to combine creative movement with works from the Orff Schulwerk Volumes. The workshop will demonstrate ideas to get your students moving with meaning! Cost is \$20 for Orff members, \$25 for non-members and \$5 for students. **RSVP to pre-register:** [michael.jones@dmps.k12.ia.us](mailto:michael.jones@dmps.k12.ia.us)

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## OAKE National Convention 2011

The Midwest region is proud to host the next national convention in Minneapolis, MN on March 17-19. Come join hundreds of Kodály educators for ***Acorns to Oaks: Nurturing Musical Growth***. What a great opportunity to be challenged and refreshed, to network and to see nationally recognized experts present amazing sessions in our own backyard! Look for some Iowa connections and be sure to check out concerts by the Ames Children's Choir and Heartland Youth Choir, as well as sessions presented by Esther D'AGrossa and Sylvia Munsen.

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## **IMEA Spring Weekend Workshop**

Mark your calendars for another great spring workshop sponsored by IMEA. Check out Jeff Kriske and Randy DeLelles on Saturday May 14 in Des Moines. The Friday night session will feature Kris VerSteeg. Those who attend both session can get credit. Cost of the workshop is \$15.

## **Levels at Drake**

Mark your calendars for this summer's levels, July 18-29. Courses will be taught by Tom and Barb Sletto and Tom Michalek. The choral component, Choral Rehearsing with Intentionality, will be taught by Ruth Dwyer from July 11-15. Visit [http://www.drake.edu/artsci/Music\\_Dept/smi/2011smi\\_flier.pdf](http://www.drake.edu/artsci/Music_Dept/smi/2011smi_flier.pdf) for more details.

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## **Happy Birthday to You - Composers of the Month**

Composers born in February: John Williams (1932), Victor Herbert (1859), Leo Delibes (1836), Felix Mendelssohn (1809), Giacchino Rossini (1792), George Frederic Handel (1685), Michael Praetorius (1571), Giovanni Palestrin (1528)

Composers born in March: Andrew Lloyd Webber (1948), Gwyneth Walker (1947), Samuel Barber (1910), Kurt Weill (1900), Bela Bartok (1881), Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (1844), Modest Moussorgsky (1839), Frederic Chopin (1810), Franz Joseph Haydn (1732), Johann Sebastian Bach (1685), Henry Purcell (1659)

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## **Songs for President's Day**

Celebrate President's Day in the music room with some of the following songs, all also available as picture books: ***The Star-Spangled Banner, This Land is Your Land, You're a Grand Old Flag, America the Beautiful, Yankee Doodle, My Country, "Tis of Thee, God Bless America and When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again.*** Consider playing some of the songs over the PA system in the morning to start the day.

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## **Jazz Books for Young Children**

Looking for a way to get more jazz into your classroom? Try one of these children's books. Then play a selection as sung or played by the musician featured in the book. Shop iTunes for many jazz albums.

**A-tisket A-tasket as sung by Ella Fitzgerald** (illus. Ora Eitan) **Duke Ellington - The Prince and His Orchestra** (Andrea Davis Pinkney) **If I Only Had a Horn - Young Louis Armstrong** (Roxane Orgill) **Charlie Parker Played Be Bop** (Chris Raschka) **Ella Fitzgerald - The Tale of a Vocal Virtuosa** (Andrea Davis Pinkney)

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## This worked for me - Valentine's Activities

Use *Sweethearts* candies to dictate or compose melodic patterns on the staff. When finished, the students can eat the hearts.

Play a song over the school PA system before the morning bell. You might choose *What a Wonderful World*, *Mail Myself to You*, or other Valentine-themed songs.

Sing the song *Love Somebody* as students pass a heart-shaped beanbag or empty heart-shaped candy box around the circle to the beat. The student who ends up with the heart can whisper the name of someone s/he loves to the bag/box.

Sing the song *I Got a Letter This Mornin'* as students pass a Valentine envelope around the circle to the beat. The student that ends up with the envelope takes out a slip of paper and reads it to the class. For Kindergarten, use simple sight words or letters of the alphabet. For other grades, use rhythm or melodic patterns or music-themed questions. (This song is also great for whole notes and syncopation.)

Remember those jump-rope songs and games that you played as a kid? Take some time at the end of class to enjoy some of these classic playground games, such as *Cinderella Dressed in Yellow*, *Bubble Gum in a Dish* and *Early in the Morning at 8 O'Clock*. These rhymes naturally reinforce the steady beat, and students will enjoy cheering the jumpers on. Ask the class to teach you one of their jump rope games. This is the folk music tradition in action! You may also find that your PE teacher is doing Jump Rope for Heart this month.

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KEI is an affiliate of the Organization of American Kodály Educators

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