

Philosophy on Music Education

by John DeFerraro

Every individual deserves the right to learn, whether one is excellent in the desired field or does not possess the least bit of talent. If any individual has this drive, then they deserve the respect as a human being to participate, especially in the realm of music. The art of choral music is what I wish to share with the world, through the study, practice, and performance of choral works with teachers and students of all ages. However, music is not the only concept that I wish to impart – it is only the tip of the iceberg, as the development of a communal sense, exposure to new concepts, commitment toward a common goal, and a sense of accomplishment and self-gratification are some of the most important life lessons that one can experience. Each of these concepts holds a very significant role in a well-rounded, holistic education.

The best way to develop a communal sense within a student body is to experience the same learning situation and to grasp how all subject matter relates to form one large picture. The guiding lights of a good educational career are the teachers – the brilliant masters of their crafts who always know the next step, and who are open to different trains of thought from their students. In the music room, the educators must go beyond this rule and carry their tutelage into other subjects. Music develops cognitive skills that apply to all other areas of the education

curriculum: math and science through such concepts as intervals and rhythm; literature and foreign languages through the various texts that are presented in a well-rounded choral program; history and the social sciences through the study of musicology, literature, and social impacts for different cultures and time periods; and physical education, through learning the musculature of singing, as well as proper engagement of the mind and body. Audio, visual, and kinesthetic learners alike will benefit under a great teacher, and the communal feeling will soon form.

For a good choral program to succeed in educating its pupils, one of the key elements is a varied repertoire with a truly diverse range. Not only will varied music selections expose the student to different life experiences, but it also serves as a tool to understanding foreign cultures and serves as a weapon against stereotypes. A blend of western art, secular, sacred, spirituals, Non-Western, folk, and even some popular music will be optimal in this process. Balance is the true key in having a well-rounded experience, and each student should have the opportunity to experience the full spectrum of music when they are a part of a choral program.

By having choirs commit toward a common goal, one sets the drive for the term's rehearsals. One can learn and gain some experience from simply listening to recordings and reading scores; but beyond this, having the pressure of a public performance instills a work ethic with which an

instructor can accomplish several things. If the choir knows that it will perform in public, the group will be more determined to push toward mastery of their material. The choir will be more eager to accept suggestions on how to clean and polish their performance. If a class processes music at a faster pace, the choir can divulge into a more in-depth repertoire and further expand their musical knowledge.

The shared sense of accomplishment and self-gratification may be the result of a great rehearsal day, but often times, it takes a slightly larger venue to fulfill this need. The issue of public performance can be used as a tool in this category as well. When a choir member participates in a large concert, singing pieces that are rehearsed over multiple months, the sense of accomplishment and self-gratification will come in the form of the applause of their peers and family members, secondary only to the intrinsic and euphoric feeling that comes from the music-making process. Concert festivals may also be used to help reach this goal. If a choir travels to a large competition, and the choir does well, they are recognized in front of hundreds (if not thousands) of well-respected judges, parents, music teachers, and other students who will applaud their hard work.

I will strive make a difference in the lives of my students, as did the music educators that I have been fortunate enough to have in the past. Each day, I will continue to learn and adapt my teaching methods to the situations that I encounter. I continually strive to create a positive singing

and community environment – a shelter from whatever else may be going on in their lives. I will use my instrumental background in percussion and piano, in addition to my voice, to impart as much knowledge as I can.

The above paragraphs are guidelines to what could be done in the classroom, but my inspiration, experience, and drive as a teacher are the most fundamental to having success in this career. I will serve as a personal model for my students, and teach them to question and understand the world around them through music. My students will learn to find the extra in the ordinary. When we finally come to realize that we are a very small part of a larger plan, life's troubles and tribulations are no match for the natural beauty that exists around us, and within ourselves, as a part of this wonderful world.