

## Making Movement Musical

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### Modeling Musical Movement

When you clap a song to your students, are your hands singing the song? Is there expression in your clapping? By listening to your hands clap a song, can your students sense the words, the phrases, the flow, and the spirit of the song? Would you conduct the song in the same way you are clapping it?

Movements such as clapping, tapping, and stepping are commonly used and valued in music classes as means for performing the musical elements to be studied. Without careful attention to the sound or feeling of the movement, however, the "performance" of the music through movement can become more mechanical than musical.

Listen to your hands as you clap the melodic rhythm of a song. Are they "singing" with the same flow as you would like to hear from voices? From another vantage point, if your students sang the song in the same style as you clapped it, how would they sound?

### Movement Is Not Necessarily Musical

Considering all the ways in which generic movements (clapping, tapping, stepping, etc....) are used in music education, we realize that musical movement warrants awareness and practice. "Clap" commonly means "applaud," and applause-clapping has no connection to any music element or to music study. In applause-clapping there is no reason for an individual to stress some claps over others or to pattern the claps into groups of faster and slower sounds.

The movement of tapping is closely associated with hammering or pounding, and stepping may connote stamping or marching. By recognizing that the simple movements which are frequently used as means for the performance and study of music have these amusical associations, we see the importance of the extra qualities which make the movement musical both in the teacher-model and in student performance.

The most significant distinction between generic movement and musical movement is that, for the latter, the ear is engaged in order to make the movement stand for something else: the music. When we listen in order to match our movement to the music, the movement forms a partnership with the sound and, therefore, becomes a performance of the music and not just of the rhythmic duration.

### Calling Students' Attention to Musical Movement

Have you noticed those times in your classes when movement is detrimental to musical flow?...when the movement makes the song mechanical?...when the movement over-powers the music?...when the movement performance has little resemblance to the intended musical performance of a song or piece?

Calling students' attention to the music and movement connection can be helpful to their own development and awareness. Concise, timely comments draw students' attention to the sounds they are producing.

"Are you singing the song?"

"Did you hear the song in your head as you tapped it?"

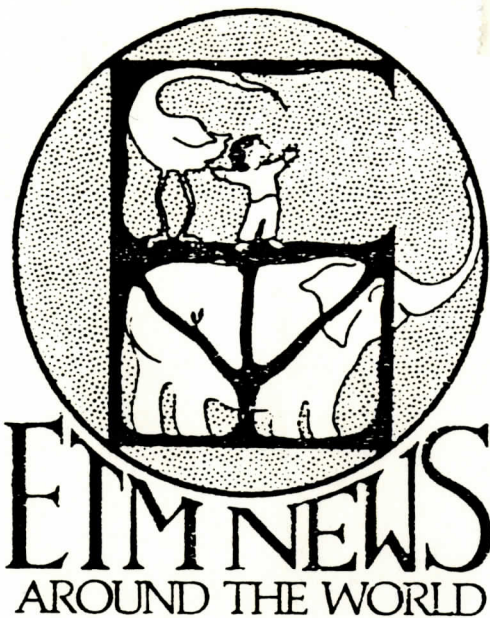
"What happened to our singing that time, did you notice?"

"How could we move so that our movement is an accompaniment to our singing, rather than the other way around?"

"The music in your head will tell your hands (or finger, or feet) how to sing."

"I sure saw the music in your hands as you led us."

(see Movement inside)



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Whether you or your students are performing secret songs, handsigns, song dotting, pentahand, hand staff, antiphonning, rhythm patterns, tonal patterns, or reading activities, musical movement should be a goal. By reminding students (and ourselves) that movement accompanies the music it is performing, a sensitivity to flow and expression in movement can become a norm in our classrooms.

### Summary

It has often been said by many of us that "the child's body (including his voice) is his musical instrument." What opportunities, then, are we providing for our students to learn how to make that instrument musical?

In music education we rely heavily on clapping, tapping and stepping to help translate the abstractness of musical sound (auditory) into the concreteness of movement (kinesthetic). The expression and flow that is music should be preserved throughout this translation. A first step in the preservation of flow and expression in movement is a teacher who models this important aspect of musicianship.

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