

## **Musical and Social Gestures in Concert: A Winning Combination for Music Learners and Teachers**

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### **Peggy's Path**

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Peggy has spent her entire career exploring, observing, and continuously conducting action research. A pivotal question has been: How can we encourage music teachers to learn from their learners and use those learner responses to shape curriculum and pedagogy?

#### **Key Mileposts in SongWorks Development**

##### **1962 Kodaly's recommendations to Mary Helen Richards**

After receiving 2 books Kodaly sent her in the 1950s, Richards created the Threshold to Music charts. During a meeting in Hungary with Zoltan Kodaly in 1962, Richards asked, "How do you teach music?" His two recommendations led to decades of searching by Richards and associates to "learn from the learners." These two recommendations created a powerful shift in Richards' priorities: a) teach according to your own language and culture and b) study the triplet and anacrusis patterns that are prevalent in "your songs, but not in ours." (Bennett, 2016)

##### **1970 Richards renamed her work**

Education through Music (ETM) and the Richards Institute signaled a new way of teaching, little by little, year by year. "Watch the children" remains a perennial goal that guides educators to watch and listen, in order to learn and teach. Working with hearing impaired children and classroom teachers offered key developments for *learning from learners*.

##### **1978-1981 Peggy's dissertation**

Focused on patterns of speech and connections to music learning, clusters of sound became focal points for performance, study, and notation. By using what is already "in" children (natural language groupings), music can be nuanced, flowing, and musical through every phase of studying, reading, and notating. Bridge notation (maps, ideographs, song dots) provide the pathway for learners to notate sound. SongWorks practices do not *initially* teach note values or specific intervals. Notation is learned in the context of language groupings. Bridge notation makes that possible

##### **1991 Discord in ETM leadership**

Long-time leaders and developers formed a new group named Music EdVentures (MEI). MEI members gathered annually and continued developing ideas, activities, and publications.

##### **1997 & 1999 SongWorks books were published.**

Dr. Peggy Bennett and Dr. Doug Bartholomew wrote *SongWorks 1* and *SongWorks 2* books to provide study materials for their university students. These books offered the frameworks for principles and practices that continue to be foundational in SongWorks teaching.

##### **2006 MEI organization was renamed SongWorks Educators Association**

Members renamed the organization and the work to align with the SongWorks books and added the tag line "Playful Teaching, Vibrant Learning."

- Bennett, P. D. (2016). Questioning the unmusical ways we teach children music (pp. 286-307). *Teaching General Music: Methods, Issues, Viewpoints*. Abril & Gault, Eds. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bennett, P. D. (Jan, 2005). So, why Sol-Mi. *Music Educators Journal*, 91(3),43-49.
- Bennett, P. D. (2013). *SongWorks for children: A video library of children making music*. Oberlin College. <http://www.oberlin.edu/library/digital/songworks/index>.
- Bennett, Peggy D. (1990). Children's perceptions of anacrusis patterns within songs. In T.W. Tunks, (Ed.) *Texas Music Education Research*, 1-7. Austin, TX: Music Educators Association.
- Bennett, P.D. (1986). When "method" becomes authority. *Music Educators Journal*, 72(9), 38-40.
- Bennett, P. D. (1986). From Threshold to Music to Education Through Music: A collaboration of the principles of Zoltan Kodaly and the work of Mary Helen Richards. *Texas Music Educators Association*. Music Education Research Reports. XII-1--XII-17.

### Principles for Teaching and Learning (SongWorks 1)

1. Students have the right to be treated with respect and dignity for their ideas, skills, and stages of development.
2. Students deserve an engaging learning environment in which they feel safe enough to demonstrate freely their understandings and skills through various types of participation.
3. Student learning is the responsibility of both teachers and students.
4. Learning is holistic and constructive.
5. A teacher's attitudes, behaviors, and methodologies should be compatible.
6. Accurate and constructive feedback helps students become independent learners.
7. Quality of life is enriched through music and singing.

Bennett, P. D. & Bartholomew, D. R. (1997). *SongWorks 1: Singing in the education of children*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. Republished 2014, SongWorks Press. [songworkspress@gmail.com](mailto:songworkspress@gmail.com)

### Principles for Teaching and Learning Music (SongWorks 2)

1. The major goal of music study is the development of a responsiveness to music.
2. The musicality that is critical to music performance is just as important in music study.
3. The fundamental skill in music behavior is listening.
4. The way music sounds rather than how it looks guides the selection and presentation of patterns for study.
5. A distinction exists between skills and concepts that are musically easy and those that are musical simple.
6. Song provides direct involvement for making music and studying sound relationships.

Bennett, P. D. & Bartholomew, D. R. (1999). *SongWorks 2: Singing from sound to symbol*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. Republished 2014, SongWorks Press. [songworkspress@gmail.com](mailto:songworkspress@gmail.com)

### Principles & Practices That Empower Teachers and Learners

1. **Questions and imaginations** interest and engage learners.
2. **Feedback that feeds** offers information, assurance, and neutral commentary to learners.
3. **Line maps** facilitate students' reading their own and others' scores.
4. **Antiphonning** demonstrates syllabic movement and linguistic clusters for performance and notation.
5. **Song dots** tap and notate syllables within natural clusters of sound.
6. **Ideographs** (pictures or graphics) offer students ways to read and write their own and others' scores.

## Hildegard's Path

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Systematic classroom observation and giving her students an active part in learning was central also to Hildegard's work as a college-level academic instructor. Indeed, both aspects (observation and a learner-centered approach) contributed to what attracted her to the Theory of Symbolic Interactionism: Successful communication requires knowledge of the social gestures that indicate who we and others are, what makes us (and others) think the way we do, and how our gestures are interpreted by others (Froehlich, 2015).

## Peggy and Hildegard's Common Path

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Throughout their time together in Texas, Hildegard and Peggy presented a few workshops at state conferences to explore similarities between the music pedagogical and sociological theories they subscribed to and the consequences for music pedagogical decisions. The workshop today celebrates that history and the relationship between a very practically minded music pedagogue and a lover of theory who finds its practicality to be without limits.

### I Teacher Language as a Social Communicative Gesture in the Music Classroom: An Overview of Past Workshops

#### 1989 Teacher Talk: Maximizing Learning by Saying What We Mean

Using instructionally meaningful (learning-empowering) rather than power-driven (teacher domineering) words

#### 1991 The Animated Educator: Entertainer or Master Teacher?

Non-Verbal and Verbal Communicative Gestures in the Classroom and Rehearsal Hall: Posture, body language/hand gestures, use of space, facial expression, eye contact, vocal inflection & volume, and wait time.

#### 1994 Freedom to Teach and To Learn: Embracing Mistakes in the Instructional Process

Reflecting on Our Past as Learners

**Summary:** Connecting principles among interactionist, constructivist, and reflective theories applied to teaching are:

- Knowledge acquisition and learning are not linear. Therefore, a curriculum or an instructional approach that emphasizes learning as one set pattern of skills can put learners at a disadvantage and is at risk of subverting thinking, diminishing creative thought, and obstructing the incentive and ability required for life-long learning.
- The reflective/interactionist practitioner considers instruction to be an ongoing and reflective dialogue between learning partners. Conditions in an instructional environment where mistakes can lead to empowerment may take several forms.
- All partners (learners and teachers alike) adhere to the same rules of behavior, and the instructional process has no hidden agenda.
- Interruption of routine activities leads to surprise and thus, can cause the stimulation of thinking skills, a prerequisite to activating conscious learning. Unique situations as identified by critical incidences (including the making of mistakes), therefore, form important, if not pivotal, points in the instructional process.
- Conscious role reversal between teacher and students is the key to working successfully along the continuum of models. Role theory, reference group theory and interactionism can become tools in widening awareness of those pedagogical models.

## II Consequences for Music Pedagogy

- **Teach Music Musically**

Be aware of social contexts and build that awareness into all instructional steps.

Use instructional rather than teacher-domineering language that shows your respect for each learner's ideas, skills, and levels of perception.

Work with learner-perceived musical patterns as the starting point of all musical exploration.

Turn perceived musical patterns into musical clusters by which to explore an entire song/composition.

- **Respond Knowingly and In-Kind to Learner-Perceived Musical and Social Realities**

## III Toward Learner-Centered Pedagogies Derived from Understanding Social and Musical Interactive Contexts

- No one pedagogy can serve all situations, learners, and musical materials
- Teacher language (both verbal and nonverbal) is key to aligning successful teaching and learning processes
- Feedback needs to feed the learner
- Embracing mistakes can be a steppingstone for learning

Froehlich, Hildegard C. (2015). *A Social Theory for Music education. Symbolic Interactionism in Music Learning and Teaching*. With a Foreword by Harold Fiske. Lewiston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press.

See also: Bennett, Peggy D. (2018). *Teaching with Vitality. Pathways to Health and Wellness for Teachers & Schools*. New York: Oxford University Press.

### Revisiting Accepted Practices

1. Logic of sequencing: Whose logic is it?
2. "Stepwise" progression: Whose steps do we make the standard? Who determines their size? How small is too small?
3. Skipping steps in the sequence: How bad is it? Advantages in skipping steps knowingly!
4. Returning ownership of learning to the learner.
5. Focusing on the teaching of practice skills: The identification and negotiation of critical incidences by the learner in his or her own "conversation" with musical performance.

### Balancing Pedagogic Models: A Continuous Effort

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#### The Master-Apprentice Model

Teacher initiates experimentation for the learner  
Learners react to teacher initiation

Teacher provides personal praise and/or criticism  
rather than informative commentary

#### The Empowerment Model

Learners initiate experimentation by  
themselves (individually and/or as a  
group)

Teacher reacts to student initiation  
with informative commentary  
and/or experiments with the learner's  
knowledge of alternative instructional  
approaches

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## IV Consequences for Research and Scholarship on Music Learning and Teaching

- Observe and analyze your own classroom language to empower your learners
- Practice and model instructional rather than power-driven language

## V Conversation: Questions, Comments, Thoughts, Critique