

INTEGRATED MOVEMENT AND MUSIC EXPERIENCES IN ONLINE MUSIC EDUCATION METHODS COURSES

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Given the natural integrated nature of music and movement, university music education methods courses frequently emphasize active experiences and teaching approaches that include strategies for effective movement and music integration designed for preservice music educators. This narrative self-study represents an exploration of facilitating integrated music and movement experiences when these courses abruptly transitioned to an online modality during the COVID-19 pandemic. Strategies for successful facilitation included: (a) using materials and spaces that are available; (b) embracing limits with flexibility; and (c) emphasizing socioemotional learning, even in online spaces. Although implications are specific to one teaching context, connections can be made across a variety of music courses where movement and music are integrated.

KEY WORDS: integrated music and movement, music education methods courses, online teaching

1. RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

There is ample evidence that music and movement are naturally linked (e.g., Cross, 2003; Phillips-Silver, 2009; Phillips-Silver & Trainor, 2005, 2007; Wallin et al., 2000). Physical movement is essential to the cognitive process of musicians, and music and movement share neural pathways, such as those related to sequential learning and time keeping (Sievers et al., 2013). Humans readily coordinate and entrain their movements with music (e.g., Ilari, 2015; Merker et al., 2009; Patel, 2008; Phillips-Silver et al., 2010), and body movements often synchronize with musical structure (Toiviainen et al., 2010). Entrainment-

based (coordinating and matching the external sound) music teaching methods may enhance verbal skills, working memory, and pitch discrimination (Maróti et al., 2019). Sensorimotor entrainment is linked to musical skills (e.g., Crumpler, 1982; Joseph, 1982; Ilari et al., 2016; Rohwer, 1998; Shiobara, 1993), and body movement can shape internal representations of auditory rhythms (Chemin et al., 2014). Infants can perceive rhythmic structures and respond with spontaneous rhythmic movement to music (Ilari, 2015). Musical learning likely supports a child's ability to use and focus their nervous systems, including judging distance and velocity (Rose et al., 2019). Even imagined bodily states influence our cognitive states (Koch & Fischman, 2011; Sedlmeier et al., 2011), and movement develops neurological foundations that facilitate language development, problem-solving skills, and creativity (Stevens-Smith, 2016). Musical training improves fine motor skills (e.g., Costa-Giomi, 1999; Costa-Giomi et al., 2005; Forgeard et al., 2008; Hyde et al., 2009; Lahav et al., 2007; Schlaug et al., 2005) and enhances spatial awareness (e.g., Patston & Tippet, 2011; Stoesz et al., 2007), and integrated music and movement develops spatial awareness (Reynolds, 2008), particularly in terms of how we relate our bodies to others in a shared space. Neurologist Oliver Sacks stated

I have only to glance at a score or think of a particular mazurka (an opus number will set me off) and the mazurka will start to play in my mind. I not only 'hear' the music, but I 'see' my hands on the keyboard before me, and 'feel' them playing the piece—a virtual performance which, once started, seems to unfold or proceed by itself. (Sacks, 2008, p. 34)

Research provides clear evidence of the direct link between movement and music, and given this natural connection, music classes of all types ideally incorporate integrated music and movement experiences for students of all ages and ability levels.

2. MUSIC EDUCATION METHODS COURSES

Because of this abundant evidence that music and movement are naturally integrated, in order to best prepare future music teachers for engaging and developmentally appropriate instruction, music education methods courses commonly include integrated music and movement, and teachers most often emphasize responsive and creative musical movement activities. In my own music education methods teaching, I've always prioritized active, integrated music and movement activities for in-person courses. These music education methods courses often include experiences such as responding to music via movement or learning musical concepts via movement. Therefore, music education methods courses frequently include experiences in a variety of approaches to active music making, such as Orff-Schulwerk, Kodály, Music Learning Theory, and Dalcroze. Although each of these approaches has distinctive elements, a commonality across all four is the integration of music and movement (Bachmann, 1991; Dalcroze, 1980; Gordon, 2013;

Keetman, 1974; Zachopoulou et al., 2003). My own students, in all music education methods courses, experienced elements of Orff-Schulwerk, Kodály, Music Learning Theory, and Dalcroze-based approaches that naturally integrated music and movement. Music making and movement through music in shared spaces were always central components of each course, and every in-person class meeting incorporated at least some type of movement activity.

Our movement experiences ranged from very open-ended and free responses or movement representations, to more prescriptive movement activities such as folk dances with specific predetermined steps. Students demonstrated their musical and pedagogical understandings through movement by embodying musical concepts such as form, tempo, dynamics, and meter. They would often express how the music made them feel via creative and open-ended movement responses to music and would also demonstrate teaching segments for their peers using movement, and then reflect upon how they might use the activity with future students. They often engaged in musical movement experiences in two layers—interacting and engaging actively as a student participant, and then shifting to reflect on the experience as a teacher by noticing how they might modify the activity to fit their lesson goals and pedagogical skill development. Also, while still in person, these methods courses included a fieldwork component, in which the undergraduate students had opportunities to teach integrated music and movement activities to children. They would frequently experience peer teaching during the designated course meeting times, and then try out their activities and strategies during teaching segments at schools.

In March of 2020, most of the movement activities of course became unsafe due to COVID-19, and I—along with most music teachers and music teacher educators—had to drastically adapt instruction midway through the semester. This included figuring out how to best facilitate integrated music and movement experiences in a completely new online format. Other music and music education courses had previously been offered online, but these specific music education methods courses had always been offered fully in person in order to provide opportunities for in-person musical and movement interactions in shared physical space.

As part of my attempt to adapt as best I could, I engaged in a self-study of my own teaching practices. As a music teacher, musician, and now a music teacher educator and researcher, I assume that research, self, and educational praxis are inextricably linked (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), and that intensive self-reflection enhances pedagogical practice. I hoped that by engaging in heightened self-reflection, I would uncover new ideas about how to integrate music and movement in an online format. I hoped that this extra layer of reflection and documentation would ease the sudden transition to fully online instruction with little preparation time, and facilitate my own best teaching practices in

terms of how to continue to foster creative and integrated movement and music experiences for my students.

3. METHOD

Because of my desire to enhance my own teaching practice and improve my students' learning, I chose to engage in autoethnographic narrative inquiry (Mallett, 2011; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Tenni et al., 2003) in order to better explore my experiences facilitating integrated movement and music activities in three online music education methods courses. Since this inquiry is specific to my own teaching practice and my students' learning, I intentionally chose a highly context-specific and situational approach to methodology. As a narrative autoethnography, this inquiry explores my experiences of a particular culture, as Patton (2002, p. 84) describes it, the goal of which is to uncover insights into this specific culture. In this case, I identify the *culture* as including the classroom communities, learners, myself as a teacher, our shared experiences, and really anything that contributed to the experience of adapting these courses to online instruction while still trying to preserve creative musical expression.

In narrative autoethnography, the product of the inquiry is context-specific excerpts from autobiographical narratives that have been re-storied multiple times. By *re-story*, I mean that these reflections have been revisited multiple times, and viewed through shifting lenses as my own perspectives have changed (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In essence, I attempted to situate my own conceptualizations of possibilities and limitations inherent in teaching these specific courses in an entirely new way. This self-study assumes that research, self, and educational praxis are inextricably linked (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), and that intensive self-reflection enhances pedagogical practice. The goal of this inquiry was not to uncover generalizable implications, but to improve my own teaching practices and the learning experiences of my students in these courses. Therefore, the purpose of this inquiry was to explore my experiences facilitating integrated movement and music activities in three online music education methods courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The following questions guided this inquiry. (a) What challenges have emerged in transitioning integrated movement/music activities to online contexts? (b) What strategies were successful in promoting students' creative expression through integrated movement/music?

4. DATA

From March 2020 to May 2021, I engaged in systemic documentation of my teaching practice using artifacts including written journals, audio and video recordings, and teaching materials. I chose artifacts that reflected my own experiences in transitioning three courses

from a fully in-person format to a fully online modality, while still facilitating creative and integrated music and movement. These specific courses were Elementary Music Education Methods, Classroom Instruments, and Diverse School Settings. Elementary Music Education Methods emphasized strategies for teaching preschool through elementary general music classes, and because the focus was on teaching younger children, this course included the most movement. Classroom Instruments emphasized skill development on classroom instruments such as ukuleles, percussion, xylophones, recorders, and other instruments commonly used in general music classrooms. Diverse School Settings focused on differentiating instruction to meet diverse student learning needs across varied age levels and music teaching contexts.

The students in all of the courses were preservice music educators in either their second or third year of a four-year baccalaureate and teacher certification program. Approximately 10–12 students were enrolled in each course. All of the students had previously experienced a variety of in-person integrated music and movement activities, and this was the first time they had taken these types of methods courses online. Although the students' personal narratives would also be of interest, the focus of this inquiry was specifically on my experiences as a teacher educator; therefore, the narratives I've chosen to highlight are all related to my teaching experiences rather than the students' stories from their perspectives as learners.

5. NARRATIVES

The following narratives represent small portraits of online music and movement experiences in these three music education methods courses. The narratives are italicized to represent re-storied excerpts, and are interspersed with additional explanations. Although narrative inquiry intentionally does not codify data into themes, the following overarching ideas emerged across multiple narratives: (a) using materials and spaces that are available; (b) embracing limits with flexibility; and (c) emphasizing socioemotional learning, even in online spaces. These overarching ideas will frame the following narratives.

5.1 Using What We Have

One strategy that emerged multiple times in varied ways included utilizing whatever we had in our individual spaces. We no longer had access to our large shared open rooms with ample movement space, nor did we have access to our shared movement props or other items. Initially, this felt like a restriction; however, the students and I were able to adapt by using what we had in our homes:

We've learned to move expressively in our own spaces. We can't connect via shared spaces but at times this seems to have opened students' minds to additional possibilities. We no longer have access to all our colorful and fun movement props like the scarves, ribbons, and stretchy bands, but students have been innovative and creative in using materials in their homes. We use what we have and make do. If picking up an item of clothing or even a dishcloth helps a student move fluidly and freely in their own space, then that's what they use. In some instances, the limits of the online space, such as the lack of physical interaction, have prompted innovation in other ways. I've seen some very creative and interesting movement exploration using what the students have in their space. Students have used items of clothing in place of props, or pencils in place of rhythm sticks. They have discovered that many activities are equally possible using just their bodies, and movement props are an enhancement, not a necessity.

Certain movement activities are of course impossible now. We can't touch each other in a physical space. There's no clapping or passing of instruments. Folk dances are almost impossible, although we've tried on one occasion to do the steps on our own self-space. We've had some success in moving responsively to each other in an online space, though. Once we accepted the lag in the audio and video, and acknowledged that things like beat-keeping activities are simply not going to be aligned, there are still opportunities to respond to each other. We've still been able to model and connect to musical concepts such as meter, rhythm, dynamics, form, and tempo using our bodies. There are just many more activities in self-space in place of our usual shared physical space. Also, our locomotor (traveling) movement space is limited, so many of our activities have transitioned to nonlocomotor (stationary) movements.

We continued to explore movement with music in every class, but often this was on a smaller scale than when we moved together in person. Doing folk dances was not feasible; therefore, we primarily focused on free-form creative movement with music.

5.2 Embracing Limits with Flexibility

Our limitations helped us to embrace flexibility and eventually helped me to let go of some of my perceptions about what constituted ideal movement activities in the context of these courses. I had always included fluid and open-ended movement activities, but in shifting to online instruction I focused even more heavily on these open-ended activities that had multiple entry points and ways to participate, rather than activities that had prescribed movements such as folk dances.

We had previously utilized Laban Movement Elements (flow, weight, space, and time) by connecting them to what we heard in music and responding with our bodies, but the

main thing that changed in an online format was our sense of scale. We still explored the bodily experience of flow, space, weight, and time, but often this was on a smaller scale. For example, rather than moving in a free-flowing way across an entire room, students perhaps only moved one arm, or even one hand in a free-flowing way. Walking fingers could substitute for full body walking, which then shifted our sense of weight, prompting further exploration. We could still embody the music in a similar way, but the scale of our bodily movements in our spaces was often smaller. This was not a negative thing, as this often encouraged students who might otherwise automatically lock into comfortable ways of moving, such as walking, to really focus in on their movements on a more micro-scale. We explored many musical elements and connected these to movement representations, with an added layer of exploring which movements were possible in our online space. Choosing specific elements of the music to focus on also helped refine our online movements. Students seemed to recognize the flexibility of this broad approach and how it could be modified to fit within a focus on specific concepts or pieces of music. Rather than telling students what movements they should substitute for movements we could no longer do together, such as walking across a room with a partner, for example, I invited them to determine their own substitutions. Some students still were able to walk and be in camera view and chose to share their movements with others, but some students did not have that space available or simply were not comfortable displaying their home environment in the background. A benefit of a very flexible and open-ended response was that I noticed that students were developing skills at adapting movement activities to their future students who might have movement limitations, even in an in-person class.

It was not as if I had previously required prescriptive movement responses for in-person classes, but the online space enabled us to focus our movement responses in specific ways. I had previously noted that, as much as I prioritized personal expression and open-ended creativity, there were often benefits to applying certain limitations on activities such as musical improvisation. Totally open-ended opportunities for creativity were often overwhelming to students in terms of the number of choices; therefore, narrowing the options often sparked additional creativity. This appeared to be the case with our movement limitations in our online space. Rather than having an overabundance of shared space and props, students were embracing the parameters of the online space with flexibility.

5.3 Emphasizing Socioemotional Learning

From a teaching perspective, my primary concern is always my students' well-being. I noted that it was at first challenging to feel socially connected in an online space. Music classes may be ideal spaces for promoting socioemotional learning (Jacobi, 2012);

however, the lack of shared physical space eliminated the ability for the students and me to respond to each other via close physical proximity, and activities that included movements such as clapping hands together—or even passing an object—were, of course, impossible. I had previously prioritized student autonomy and efficacy, and recognized that their experiences in music courses contributed to their efficacy beliefs (Prichard, 2017). I wanted to continue to promote their autonomy and efficacy, but found I had to adjust my own expectations.

I've had to let certain perceptions and expectations go, such as requiring them to turn on their cameras. It's not fun to teach to a black grid of names, but inviting rather than requiring them to unmute and turn on their cameras has proved to be more helpful than a rigid requirement.

The classes that had a strong social bond with each other always seemed more comfortable with in-person movement activities than the classes that didn't seem to have as strong of a social connection, and the same seems to hold true in online spaces. If students had a prior connection with each other, they were far more free and uninhibited in their movements. There was more hesitancy among students in classes where they simply didn't know each other as well yet. This is completely understandable. Over time, their comfort and trust with each other grew, and this definitely facilitated their movement comfort as well. The more connected and comfortable the students were with each other, the more freedom they demonstrated in their creative movement expression.

At the beginning of each course, I included activities that helped the students get to know each other better, such as sharing favorite activities and music. In addition to checking in and offering students space and time at the beginning of every class to share of themselves and get to know their peers, I adjusted my academic expectations in order to prioritize students' social and emotional well-being. Student accountability became a big challenge, and it was difficult to know if a student did not attend class or submit an assignment by choice or because of circumstances beyond their control, such as technology and Internet access issues. Despite attending the same private university, the students had varying access to technology due to inequities in socioeconomic status. I found I had to let go of certain expectations in order to be more empathetic to student concerns. In order to build in accountability, and emphasize the importance of following schedules and deadlines, I had previously used a “no late assignments accepted for credit” policy in these courses. During fully online instruction I became aware of access inequality issues related to the Internet, spaces at home in which to join class, and other personal and family life considerations that varied drastically from student to student. Rather than adhering rigidly to my previous assignment policy, I began inviting students to do what worked for them in order to complete the assignment and represent their learning. As long as they communicated with me about what their specific needs were, I adapted my

assessments and evaluations to make them more flexible. For example, if I asked students to create a 10-minute movement activity they might use for a second-grade general music class, rather than dictate that they must teach the demo live in class, I offered them additional options such as recording themselves teaching and sharing the video during class, or uploading it to our shared class folder for other students to view that week and provide feedback later. It worked well to build in flexibility in assignments and different options for completing assignments.

Acknowledging that students were experiencing challenging life situations simply by living through a global pandemic helped connect with their life experiences, and promoted an online classroom climate of care and respect. Emphasizing their well-being over rigid assignment guidelines also seemed to facilitate their creativity, which was evident in their music making and movement expression during classes. Here is one example of this type of flexible assignment:

I invited students to choose how to “represent their learning.” They were asked to create a short movement activity for an elementary general music class and choose the grade level. They could assume whatever they thought was appropriate in terms of the children's background knowledge, and adapt the mini lesson to the current online context. I offered multiple options for “sharing” their mini lesson, including teaching it live online over Zoom during class time, sharing a prerecorded video, or even choosing to not share it during class and instead upload it to a shared class folder. These were really the only guidelines I provided, and although a couple of students were a bit uncomfortable with such an open-ended assignment at first, after answering their questions, the whole class really embraced the assignment. I was pleasantly surprised by the creative and unique ways they chose to approach the assignment. If I had told them to choose something specific, such as a folk dance for a third-grade general music class, the variety of their choices would have been reduced. Although it can appear messy at first, and students are often concerned about doing something “the right way,” once they embraced the open-ended nature and flexibility of the assignment, they created movement and music activities that best fit their teaching style and personality, and the learning objectives for the course were still met.

As one specific example of an integrated music and movement experience that worked successfully online and also addressed the learning goals for a methods course, I share the story of an activity from the Elementary Methods course, using the words that I used to introduce the activity to the students:

Today we'll explore a flexible activity that you can use with your future students. You can connect this to music concepts and learning objectives you're focusing on, and encourage your own students to represent their musical understanding via movement. Before you begin, you'll choose a piece of music. Any piece will work, and your choice

can align with the focus of your particular lesson. I recommend you choose short musical examples, or a small segment of a larger work. Aim for no more than two minutes, since then you can easily revisit the musical excerpt multiple times in one class period. You can also play a live musical example, or ask a student to perform a live musical example. The specific repertoire choice is dependent on the focus of your lesson.

[I played the recording of the chosen piece and encouraged the students to move in their own spaces. I asked for volunteers to turn on their cameras, so that their peers can see other options for movement.]

With this musical example, explore all the ways you can move your body in the space you currently have to show either flow, weight, space, or time. As the piece continues to play, notice new ways of moving and continue to explore new possibilities. If you notice you are moving in the same way continuously, I encourage you to explore other options.

We followed up this activity with a discussion of how the students might modify the activity for specific music classes and age groups, what they noticed about the activity, what worked well for them, and what they might change. This invited the students to experience this activity in multiple layers—as a student participant, and also as a reflective future music teacher.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Although these short narrative excerpts are specific to my teaching context, connections can be made to other areas of music instruction, and even other subject areas. Approaching the transition from fully in-person to fully online instruction for classes that have never previously been taught online was initially challenging; however, engaging in extensive self-reflection helped me identify strategies and approaches that were most beneficial to my students' learning, particularly in terms of continuing to facilitate creative and engaging music and movement experiences. By using materials and spaces that we had available, embracing our limits with flexibility, and emphasizing our well-being over rigid learning expectations, we more readily adapted to our new online modality.

The most important aspect of utilizing what we had was acknowledging inequities in access to materials because of our different home environments. As the course instructor, I had access to many of the university-owned materials if I chose to return to campus and collect them. The students did not have this option, thus their access to materials that might enhance movement was entirely dependent on their home environments. For example, in anticipation of their future teaching, some students had already begun purchasing items such as beanbags, scarves, rhythm sticks, and other commonly used

materials for movement exploration. Other students were not financially able to purchase these items, and had previously not needed to because of the university-owned supplies. Although I envisioned ways to utilize props such as scarves and puppets in an online environment, I acknowledged that the students, in most cases, did not have extensive music-specific materials. This necessitated flexibility and openness to other possibilities. Rather than requiring students to have a set of scarves purchased from a music store, I encouraged them to use any piece of fabric-like material they had available. Also, if students had limited space at home, I encouraged them to consider the scale of the movements and adapt them accordingly. For example, rather than traveling across a large shared space, they could replicate many movement activities using just their hands or arms. Inviting individualized responses for every activity set up an online classroom space where differences of interpretation were encouraged.

The limits within the online space frequently enhanced our collective flexibility and creativity. What we initially viewed as an extremely limiting online space continued to be a space for shared musical and movement expression. Although we missed interacting in close physical proximity to one another, by prioritizing socioemotional learning and the overall physical, emotional, and mental well-being of all within our online classroom spaces, we were able to craft shared spaces that invited divergent responses and representations of learning. Challenges certainly occurred, such as teaching to “black squares with names” when students did not feel comfortable turning on their cameras. But encouraging divergent ways to represent their learning, such as recording their activity to share later, promoted an online classroom climate of care and inclusion, which in turn encouraged students to open up and take creative risks.

This inquiry generated additional questions. We wondered if there were components of this online approach that could be retained when and if these courses shift back to an in-person modality post-pandemic. This warrants further exploration of the aspects of online teaching that worked well for these particular courses, as well as which aspects are best taught in an in-person format. Likely, we would choose to continue to move together in shared physical space when we can, but also retain components of online instruction, including pedagogical processes for integrating music and movement via interactive discussions or video recordings. An additional in-depth inquiry into the specific components of these classes that could best be addressed online would be valuable. We also wondered if there are ways to better address issues of unequal access within online spaces. Specifically, for these courses, I wondered if there are additional ways I can address these challenges beyond what I am currently doing, and what university resources I can employ toward this goal.

Although this inquiry is specific to one teacher and three specific classes of students, the implications for others may include the benefit of engaging in self-study and inquiry related to their specific teaching contexts. While there are not concrete answers to share, I

encourage other music educators (as well as all educators) to explore their own practices via self-study and reflection. Taking the time to carefully consider how you can best design your online teaching spaces will positively affect your teaching and your students' learning. We discovered that continuing to promote well-being through creative, integrated movement and music experiences is most certainly still possible in online spaces.

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