

The Discerning Process of Song Selection

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Abstract

Songs that were once considered standard repertoire in elementary music programs across Canada are now being identified as including derogatory, misogynistic, and/or harmful texts. While there has been research and findings compiled on the text of songs (Bailey, 2020; Ellingsen, 2019; Kelly-McHale, 2018; McDougale, 2021), this is still a relatively new field, particularly regarding how information about texts of songs is shared with teachers. How can existing music education programs provide learning opportunities around repertoire selection for both in-service and preservice teachers? The Orff Level Certificate Program of Carl Orff Canada works with both preservice and in-service music teachers. The Orff program occurs on a yearly basis, with approximately 25 teacher educators and 250 teachers enrolled across the country. With the majority of elementary educators being “white, middle class, female, heterosexual teachers” (Holden & Kitchen, 2019, p. 27), there is a need to acknowledge the social hierarchy present in the classroom, that is, the power and privilege held by music educators. By working with music teachers to think critically about what musics to include, Orff Level Teacher Educators can provide the tools for music educators to “shape a curriculum and a pedagogy that purposefully places classroom musics alongside students’ own musics, experiences and interests (Hess, 2017, p. 71). In March 2021, an online survey, including a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended questions was sent to 25 Orff Level Teacher Educators in Canada. Responses were received from 17 teacher educators. The following questions guided the investigation: (a) How are songs selected for inclusion in the program? (b) Have there been changes to the repertoire list over the last five years? If so, what is driving these changes? (c) How do teacher educators see their selection process of repertoire impacting teachers’ choices of repertoire? Using thematic analysis, I analyzed the responses looking for common themes. These findings have served as a foundation for dialogue with Orff Teacher Educators. The next phase of the study will begin in spring 2022 where I will be interviewing three to five participants to further clarify findings from the survey portion of the research.

Key points

- In March 2021 an online survey about the song selection process was completed by Orff Teacher Educators in Canada
- The survey was compiled in response to a growing need for music educators to address problematic songs that have long been included in music programs across North America.
- As Orff teacher education occurs across the country, these courses may be an ideal platform to begin and continue conversations with teachers for making changes to their song lists.

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