

“Connect the dots...Color the Lines”
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Legacy is defined, by Merriam-Webster as, “something transmitted by or received from a predecessor ...” According to our OAKE mission our common legacy is, “to enrich the quality of life of the people of the USA through music education by promoting the philosophy of Zoltán Kodály” (www.oake.org). We even have a ‘Legacy Fund’ to ensure that our mission is sustained for generations to come. However, what will we say in twenty years about our organization, about KET, and about our own work in the classroom? Answers to the below two questions can help us all in our quest:

1. Should we connect the dots now or later?
2. How are we coloring in the lines?

Steve Jobs, in his famous speech at Stanford (that went viral on the media recently), admonished graduates to trust that the ‘dots will connect’ down the road. His premise is to that if you explore whatever avenues intrigue you, eventually, all things will connect and create a complete picture. While this is profitable for a person it is also helpful for an organization. Trying too hard to ‘connect the dots’ can make one anxious to control an outcome in a particular way. An old Quaker saying is to simply “Let your life speak” (Palmer, p. 10, 2000). Meaning, look inside to see what is calling out to be heard. Obviously, there is a necessary time for deep personal reflection before the larger decisions in life. However, what about the smaller miraculous moments occurring every day? Am I really listening to my students as they respond to questioning? If they are not able to answer critical questions, is it really that I did not do enough preparation for the concept? Are they just having an “off” day? Did I miss something and forget a step in the process? Am I listening as they let their lives speak with where they are as mini-musicians?

While we are exploring the wonderful avenues that teaching music affords, we need to ask ourselves: How are we coloring in the lines? According to Parker Palmer, “Good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (p. 10, 2000). Estelle Jorgensen articulates this challenge: “When we are deluged with information and pressed with work, it is sometimes difficult to take the time for, and realize the importance of, listening to the teacher within. . . We can become so busy. . . that we do not have time to reflect on what is really important” (Jorgensen, p. 4, 2008). Too many times, I find myself caught up with e-mails, field trip requests, and other administrative duties, making it difficult to carve out time to really focus on my teaching process. This is especially true when what worked last year does not work for this year’s group. Do I blame the group or do I place the onus on myself to change and adapt? Do I consistently allow the Kodály mantra of “Quality music for everyone” to guide and steer my repertoire choices? Is my practice consistent with my beliefs of who I am as a teacher and who we are as a KET community?

Recently, I completed an in-depth comparative analysis of *The Kodály Method* by Lois Choksy and *Kodály Today* by Micheal Houlahan and Philip Tacka. Personal communication with

authors, Dr. Jerry Jaccard and Patty Moreno was conducted. Also, the number of pages devoted to various topics was statistically analyzed. Quality of content was not assessed. Strikingly, they were more similar than expected though their personal journeys did influence their differences. After communication with Choksy, Houlahan and Tacka, all authors shared in their core philosophy:

- Music should be the end goal, not the method.
- Extensive use of singing as a tool for learning.
- “To make the masterpieces of the world literature, public property...” (Kodály, 1974, p. 160).
- Use of high quality music.
- Teaching music is hard work.
- Teachers should be high quality musicians.
- Teachers should adapt pedagogy to individual situations. According to Choksy, “...the sequence given here will and should be altered according to the population with whom it is to be used” (1999, p. 179). Similarly, Tacka explained, “You follow a basic recipe when you’re cooking but you make the end product really distinctive and your own by adding your own creativity to it” (personal communication March 20, 2010).

Both curricula devoted a similar amount of time to Choral Literature, Creative Expression, Instruments, Literacy and Part-work. Differences arose due to the following possibly factors:

- Other publications by the author that could supplement the curriculum.
- Categories were focused on in different ways.
- Changing historical context between the publishing dates of both curricula (1999 & 2008).
- Differing visions for the text.

After all data were analyzed and categorized, all authors developed their curriculum out of passion for their fellow musician-teachers with a conviction that they had something valuable to contribute to this end. During interviews about the vision for the work, both author groups did not state that they wanted to create the most famous curriculum ever written. On the contrary, both curricula were devised to help teachers and articulate their own philosophical vision, to leave their own legacy. These massive curricula (between 543-620 pages), were designed out of a desire by master teachers to let their life work speak into the world.

As we learn from master pedagogues, of the past and present, and from our students every day, we create our own connections —making our own “dots”. What will we keep? What will we erase? How will we “color in the lines”? Will we teach with integrity to our training as well as to the knowing that comes from experience? Will we trust our own voices to speak from our identity? Will we live with integrity to who we say that we are? May we all take a moment, to reflect; what “dots” are there still left to explore? How will we walk in-between the dots and color in the lines? May we walk with integrity in our common vision and, most of all, with ourselves.

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