

How Do We Evaluate Music?

'Tis the season for concerts! What a perfect time for students to evaluate their own music and the music of others. This lesson really pushes the composition process to a whole new level. It is no longer just about getting sound down on paper, rather the sounds we choose are as important as the elements we choose to enhance them. Once this is realized, composing becomes an art form.

Objectives:

1. Students will devise criteria for evaluating performances and compositions
2. Students will explain, using appropriate music terminology, their personal preferences for specific musical works and styles

Materials:

- Several different kinds of music on CD
- Note Knacks and Time Signature Frames
- Paper and Pencils

Methods:

1. In each of the Note Knacks' phases, children compose. Before they begin, have children listen to several pieces of music on CD.
2. Have children start to point out the differences. Were all of the dynamics the same? Tempos? Etc... Make a list on the board.
3. Did the choice in dynamics, tempo etc... make sense for that particular piece? Why or why not?
4. Talk about music as a means of communication.
5. In each of these pieces, what message or feeling was the composer trying to convey?
6. Did he/ she achieve it? How do we know it was achieved? What tells us this? Make a list on the board. (How specific can they get? From dynamic and tempo choice to long and short sound choice, explain the many elements that contribute to the overall piece, including orchestration.)
7. Now remind the children that they too are composers and they can communicate a thought, feeling or message with their composition.
8. The assignment is to get into pairs and create a composition that is 4 measures long using the Note Knacks Method.
9. Have children discuss what thought, feeling or message they would like to convey.
10. Have children write it down, then compose their piece.
11. Have children add their elements and orchestration to convey their message.
12. Give children time to rehearse. Emphasize that the performance is as important as what is written on the page.
13. Have children perform their compositions.
14. Ask the class what message were the composers trying to convey and was it achieved?
15. Was the music performed thoughtfully and artfully?
16. As your students see performances either in school or elsewhere, use this criteria to judge others' work, as well as their own.
17. Also, as music is discussed in class, children will begin to realize what genres of music he/ she likes and will begin to know why.

Assessment:

- Did students devise criteria for evaluating performances and compositions?
- Did students explain, using appropriate music terminology, their personal preferences for specific musical works (and styles)?