

### Inspiring our Students

We provide inspiration for our students everyday: a poem, a personal story, a famous quote, artwork. Music is also something that inspires students. They may enjoy playing it, composing it or performing it, but don't forget listening to it. Listening to music is the most basic of all ways to appreciate music and yet it is often overlooked as a means from which students become inspired to learn. Whether you are a music teacher or not, listening to music can be part of your teaching repertoire. You can use listening experiences to teach, reinforce and enhance the curriculum you currently teach.

### Is This Book For Me?

This book is for ALL TEACHERS who have a love or appreciation for music and would like to share that with their students. You do NOT need to be a musician to use this book. You DO need to be a teacher who encourages your students to explore music, welcomes their love of music in the classroom and is willing to give them musical opportunities to learn. The strategies found in this book are adaptable to all age groups and abilities.

#### For Music Teachers!

As a music teacher, you will be able to use this book as a comprehensive unit of study where students learn the value of listening to music. This book will show you how to introduce the art of listening to your students as you learn strategies to encourage your students to listen actively. The activities and lessons will give them opportunities to respond to, interpret and speak intelligently about music. Everything from introductory lessons about listening to a meaningful assessment is included in this book for you.

#### For Classroom Teachers!

As a classroom teacher, you will appreciate the practical applications this book has to your teaching situation. You will be able to integrate many of these active listening activities and lessons in a meaningful way that connects to your core curriculum. You can collaborate with your music teacher or do this on your own. Either way, your students will appreciate the innovative opportunities you will provide for them.

### How Do I Use This Book?

This book is separated into three parts:

1. Teacher Overview – This section gives you the basic knowledge you need to know about the three types of listening as well as a guide for how to use the active listening experiences in your classroom.
2. Lessons – This large section takes you through all the steps to implement active listening activities and lessons into your classroom.
3. Background Knowledge – This section provides all kinds of information on composers, musical genres and helpful references. It also contains two complete projects that deal with background knowledge you can use in your classroom.

Whether you are a music teacher or general classroom teacher, you will find this book to be a great resource. You can use the activities and lessons to implement a complete unit or pick and choose what you would like to use for a one-time project.

## Why Active Listening?

Years ago, when I began to take over my cooperating teacher's fifth grade classroom during my student teaching, she encouraged me to do something with music, since she knew how much a part of my life it was. That weekend, I thought and thought about what I could do. The school had just been visited by Dennis Kobray, an actor-musician who does a phenomenal presentation of composer Ludwig van Beethoven's life and works (as well as other musicians), so I knew that his presentation was still fresh in the students' memories. I knew I had to pick something fairly short to keep the students' interest as well as something familiar, if possible. Beethoven's beautiful piano piece *Für Elise* seemed to be an obvious choice and the students already knew the basic story behind it from Kobray's presentation. I thought we could interpret it by scribbling and by a brainstorm of words. As I thought of more ideas, I got excited. We could write a letter using our brainstorms to write the words that Beethoven couldn't find! On Monday, I started the group of lessons with my students. By the end of this project, the students had a great understanding of who Beethoven was, what the rondo form was, and were able to use their letter writing skills to interpret the music. The students were proud to share their letters and Mrs. Emily Morency, the teacher, was thrilled with this integrated work.

During the rest of my student teaching, Mrs. Morency, who noticed the students' new motivation to write, encouraged me to continue this integration of music. So, I arranged for there to be time for students to listen to music during their language arts class and with that, new interpretation lessons were developed. The Khatchaturian cartoons, the Vivaldi violin monologues and the rhythm settings were three more that were created. Besides that, I began to develop my beliefs and my theory of integrating music into the classroom. "Active listening," as I began to call it, was becoming a real teaching tool that could be used and the outcomes were very rewarding. Students grew to love music as they listened to it actively and they were using their language skills to respond to it in various ways.

The next fall, I started my first job as a second grade teacher at the Centerville School in Beverly, Massachusetts. While there, I arranged for there to be active listening time every day for my students. During snack time, my second graders listened to everything from Mozart to Duke Ellington. I took them on a musical journey through time, concentrating on a composer or musician each month, listening to their music, one piece a week. Sometimes we danced to it, sometimes we drew what we imagined, sometimes we talked about it and sometimes we wrote about it; but we always enjoyed it: listening together and sharing in the experiences. Not only were the students enjoying the music in the classroom, but their parents were as well. Many parents commented throughout the year on how much they appreciated the focus I put on music in the classroom.

About two months into that school year, I was fortunate enough to enroll into a Master's program at nearby Endicott College. I found out about it one day and started my first class the next. It was a degree program in Arts and Learning and it sounded like the perfect program for me. During my time there, I was able to develop more lesson plans for my repertoire and received much encouragement and applause from my peers and professors.

Since some undergraduate classes at Gordon College, my arts-based research class at Endicott gave me another chance to see what others were doing in the field of listening. I was pleased to see that my basic ideas were supported in the literature I read, even literature that cited examples from the 1930s. One person's writing in particular caught my attention. It was that of modern composer William Schuman who had written an introduction to Aaron Copland's *What to Listen for in Music* (1939) in 1988. Many of his views on listening to music supported mine. He especially concentrated on the importance of listening to music actively.

"The first prerequisite for listening to music is so obvious that it almost seems ludicrous to mention, yet it is often the single element that is absent: to pay attention and to give the music your concentrated effort as an active listener."

-William Schuman

Obviously the idea of listening to music is not new. It is, of course, the most natural thing to do with it. However this approach of making it a part of the general classroom routine by encouraging students to listen actively and integrating those experiences directly with the curriculum seemed relatively new.

Now, as a music teacher, I have applied the same ideas to my lessons with a new perspective. (Sometimes my students wonder why the language arts are integrated into their music class so much.) It is only by becoming active listeners that they can truly become lifelong learners and appreciators of all kinds of music.

## Acknowledgments

Years have passed since I first started typing out my ideas on my once-new laptop. My biggest supporters have been my family. It is through my dad Richard Trask's gift of writing and my mom Ethel's gift of publishing, I have been able to create this book. There have been many drafts and many late nights. It would have been impossible to complete this without them. My husband Brad's patience and encouragement is endless. Even my infant son Zachary has been supportive in these last weeks allowing his mom to have good nights' sleep and productive days at the computer putting on the finishing touches. And I would be remiss not to mention my little "sesame seed" who will meet the world soon!

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I am fortunate and excited to share these ideas with you! If music interests you, I guarantee that this will be appealing no matter what grade or subject you teach.