

Loop the Loop!
**Spinning Interactive Circles to Develop Choral Sound,
Engage Awareness and Explore Artistry**

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Research conducted at University of Colorado Boulder

Philosophical Foundation¹

- Music Education as Aesthetic Education (Bennett Reimer)
- Music = material (musical elements) organized to be meaningful (expressive)
- How do we teach students to perceive and respond to music with feeling?
- Action Plan: To increase students' awareness of the inner workings of musical materials to inspire more effective, expressive and successful performances. Simultaneously, students learn more about themselves, about art and feeling, and about the world around them.
- How? Use kinesthetic (movement) rehearsal activities and interactive loops to increase students' awareness of and connection to their own voices, the music, and collaborative ensemble performance.

Artful Expression = Musical energy (line) flowing through time and space via sound and feeling²

- **Three Modes of Movement:**
 1. Gesture (e.g., keep beat; tap melodic rhythm; show sound and phrasing; etc.)
 2. Movement in Place (e.g., step beat; step melodic rhythm; step rests; step accents; etc.)
 3. Movement in Space (e.g., walk beat or melodic rhythm; tug-of-war for suspensions; etc.)
- **Three Performance Factors:**
 1. Singing and sound (vocal technique: group and individual)
 2. Individual musical awareness (details in the score)
 3. Ensemble artistry (interaction and sensitivity to collaboration)

Movement Brings Things Together! Your (Whole) Body is Your Instrument!

- Unifies choral sound and interpretation
- Encourages functional unity and freedom of vocal technique
- Strengthens individual and ensemble artistry and expression
- Stimulates understanding and connection to musical material
- Bonds ensemble personally and musically

Study: *A Descriptive Study to Measure Student Self-Perceptions of Kinesthetic Rehearsal Techniques: Effectiveness on Tone, Awareness and Expressivity* [Gemmell].

Sponsored by the President's Teaching and Learning Collaborative, "an extension of work begun as an institutional participant in the Campus Program of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) 2006-2009.

- For specific details, see pp. 5-6

¹ See the writings of music education philosopher Bennett Reimer, especially *A Philosophy of Music Education: Advancing the Vision*, 3rd edition, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 2003, 1989, 1970.

² See Jacques-Dalcroze, Emile. *Rhythm, Music and Education*. Translation by Harold F. Rubinstein. New York: B. Blom, 1972. For a concise summary of various music education approaches, see Landis, Beth and Polly Carter. "The Approach of Emile Jacques-Dalcroze" in *The Eclectic Curriculum in American Music Education: Contributions of Dalcroze, Kodaly, and Orff*. Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference, 1972.

Interactive Loops Encourage Awareness and Collaboration:



Guidelines for Movement: Musical Exploration and Discovery

With the creation of a "safe" rehearsal environment, using kinesthetic activities while singing are a natural physical and feelingful response to musical perception. Our improved ability to respond to music reinforces our ease and freedom of singing, our artistry, and our ability to collaborate as an ensemble.

- 1) Strive to be centered and balanced. Anticipate movement, think ahead, and be prepared!
- 2) Be ready! Use balls of feet, not heels. Step artistically, like a dance.
- 3) Feel connection to your "core" – a buoyant center of support and breath energy.
- 4) Use your eyes to communicate, your animated face to express yourself, and your ears to listen to others. Share your sound (and feelings) with others.
- 5) Coordinate upper body with lower body to retain balance and physical inner harmony and flow.
- 6) Make sure all movements remain music-centered, mindful and artful. Focus on the music and its expression. Use your thoughts and feelings to guide your physical actions.

Let's Get Moving and Looping! The Movement/Singing Cycle

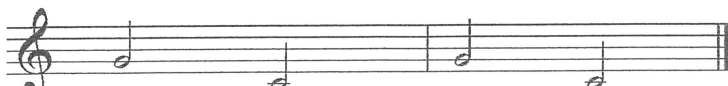
Begin with Gestures (incl. conducting patterns), proceed to Movement in Place, and then Movement in Space.

- Ready
- Preparation (Breath)
- Initiation
- Travel (show/feel musical flow through gesture)
- Sustain
- Release

Vocalises, Tuning Activities and Simple Songs.

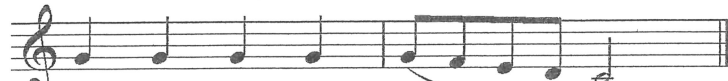
Vocalises and Tuning Exercises - 1

for *Loop the Loop!* Presentation

1) 
Hm Bah - loon.

Concepts: Forward placement; keep open space on closed vowel; feeling of "up" on descending interval.

Kinesthetics: Gestures- show breath with downward outward expansion to right; hum w/L to R horizontal gesture; feel balloon rise on descent.

2) 
ee - oh - ee - oh - ee - oh.


Concepts: Focused, ringing sound on smooth air stream.

Kinesthetics: Large, vertical circles to encourage breath flow and feeling of tall resonating spaces.

3) 
thee oh ah

Concepts: Buoyant, energized, lean sound; detached articulation with singing on breath; tenuto vs. staccato.

Kinesthetics: "Martini shaker"

4) 
ah - eh - ee - oh - oo

Concepts: Pure, well-produced vowel sounds.

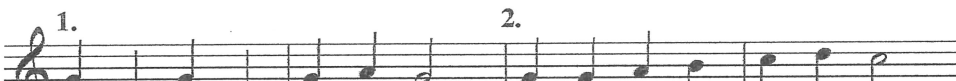
Kinesthetics: Vowel gestures; see Jeff Johnson's video: *Ready, Set, Sing* (Santa Barbara Music Press).

5) 
d r m f s l t d r d t l s f m

Concepts: Solfege; tuning in context of scale.

Kinesthetics: Gestures-Curwen hand signs approached with awareness of tone production.

The Bicycle Canon

1. 
s m s m s l s

Concepts: solfege familiarity through step-wise melodic shape; melodic line, yet also sustained chords to tune internal dissonant/consonant intervals.

2. 
s s l t d r d


Kinesthetics: Gestures- Curwen hand signs for pitch identification and tone; step melodic rhythm to engage body.

3. 
m r d t l s f

4. 
s f m r d t d

Concept: Good vocal technique; keep air moving; low connection to breath on high note; focus middle voice, open resonating spaces (modify vowels) as pitch ascends.

Kinesthetics: Appropriate gestures to expand downward and outward for inhalation; wide sternum, tall posture; step half-note pulse; bend knees into top to ground physical connection to breath energy.

7) 
Sing with confidence the con-so-nants in front of the vowel.

Concept: Consonant articulation.

Kinesthetics: Appropriate gesture.

8) 
Zee ah

9) 
Oh, I love to sing and dance for move - ment brings my voice to life!

Seque into more involved movement; step pulse and make words come to life and sound convincing!

Vocalises and Tuning Exercises - 2

for *Loop the Loop!* Presentation

1. When We Sing in English

J. Gemmell

With joy!

When we sing in Eng-lish, it's like I - ta - lia - no, with beau-ti - ful vowels so pure-ly pro-duced, with con-so-nants clear, ar - ti-cu-la-tors loose, a flu-id le-ga-to we sing: pa - sta, — la-sa-gna, piz-za!

2. Morning Bicycle Ride (Tuning Canon)

With motion (and in tune!)

J. Gemmell

1. Rid - ing bikes is so much fun, 2. climb - ing hills up to the sun.
3. Down the hills we like to coast, 4. then back home to eat some toast.

3. Tuning Exercise: *One, one, one* w/thanks to Scott Tucker, Cornell University

Sustain pitch in Bases;
Listen for overtones
(8ve, 5th, 4th, M3, m3)

Continue ascend/descend by 1/2 steps;
vary dynamics and articulations, etc.

For SATB: B(root), T(5th), A(3rd), S(root)

Hum, [u], [i], [o], [a] One, one, one, one, One, one, one, one, One, one, one, one, One, one, one, one, One, Day, Night, High, Low —

4. Tuning Exercise: *Scale and Chords*. Use solfege, numbers, vowels, neutral syllables, etc.

Tutti choir ascends to *ti* (S hold) (B hold) (A hold) (B hold) Resolve (S hold, ATB move downward)

do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do, ti, la, sol, fa, mi, re, do

5. Canon: *Viva, viva la musica*

Traditional

(1) Vi - va, vi - va la mu - si - ca, (2) vi - va, vi - va la mu - si - ca, (3) vi - va la mu - si - ca.

A Descriptive Study to Measure Student Self-Perceptions of Kinesthetic Rehearsal Techniques: Effectiveness on Tone, Awareness and Expressivity

[Jeffrey S. Gemmell, University of Colorado Boulder, September—December 2010]

Sponsored by the President's Teaching and Learning Collaborative, "an extension of work begun as an institutional participant in the Campus Program of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) 2006-2009."

Procedure:

1. Students learned and were able to identify various kinesthetic rehearsal techniques practiced *while singing*.
2. Students discerned how these activities influence the three performance factors under consideration.
3. Students evaluated the effectiveness of the techniques by completing a survey/questionnaire in two parts:
 - a. Questions with responses via a Likert scale to measure quantitatively each kinesthetic technique and its influence on a specific area of performance.
 - b. Short-answer questions that allow students to reflect in writing to measure their perceptions qualitatively, for example:
 - i. "Why or why not are kinesthetic awareness activities effective for you?"
 - ii. "What in particular do you like or dislike about them?"
 - iii. "Do you hear or feel a difference in your own performance during kinesthetic activities?"
 - iv. "Do you believe such rehearsal techniques benefit the sound, awareness, and expressivity of the choir?"
 - v. "Are there any other thoughts you would like to share concerning this project?"
4. Distribute the survey/questionnaire twice, at the beginning and at the end of the semester.
5. Compile and analyze the responses to build a narrative of how student view these activities in relation to their music making.

Results:

EFFECTIVENESS RATING

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Not</i>				<i>Somewhat</i>					<i>Very</i>
<i>Effective</i>				<i>Effective</i>					<i>Effective</i>

Ensemble Averages: (Two surveys (10/9/10, 12/7/10; * = highest ratings)

A. Rate the effectiveness of _____ on **TONE/VOCAL TECHNIQUE:**

- *1. **Gesture** = 8
- 2. **Movement in place** = 6.8
- 3. **Movement in space** = 7.6

B. Rate the effectiveness of _____ on **ATTENTION SCORE/MUSICAL AWARENESS:**

- 1. **Gesture** = 7.9
- 2. **Movement in place** = 7.4
- *3. **Movement in space** = 8.5

C. Rate the effectiveness of _____ on **INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSION/ENSEMBLE ARTISTRY:**

- *1. **Gesture** = 8.7
- 2. **Movement in place** = 7.6 [+12% on second survey]
- 3. **Movement in space** = 8.4

According to students' perceptions:

D. Kinesthetic rehearsal techniques are effective (79%)

E. There is a **hierarchy to technique effectiveness:**

- 1. Gesture (27%)
- 2. Movement in Space (25%)
- 3. Movement in Place (22%)

F. The **MOST effective combinations** are:

- 1. Gesture on Expression/Ensemble Artistry (87%)
- 2. Movement in Space on Musical Awareness (85%)
- 3. Movement in Space on Expression/Artistry (84%)

Results: (cont'd)

G. The **MOST effective technique** for ____ is ____:

1. Tone/Vocal Technique; Gesture (80%)
2. Musical Awareness; Movement in Space (85%)
3. Expression/Ensemble Artistry; Gesture (87%)

H. The **LEAST effective combinations** are:

1. Movement in Place on Tone (68%)
2. Movement in Place on Musical Awareness (74%)
3. Movement in Place and Movement in Space on Musical Awareness and Tone (76%)

Selected Student Comments:

- "I like the energy it brings right off the bat."
- "Liked the energy the activities created. I think it really got people to come out of their shell and have fun."
- "...helped by using more of my brain to be attuned to the music I'm making."
- "...effective because they provide a means to visualize the music."
- "I wish we could perform like this! I loved watching how each voice part physically meshes w/the others and how each choir member emotionally interprets each song."
- "These techniques are very useful to the choir – not only for our performance, but also for our interest in practicing and our engagement. After using these techniques, I generally feel that they are effective and useful."
- "I like the expressiveness of the group members when moving around. The gestures in place really helped me to pay attention to the details in the score. I disliked some of the movement in place, because I wanted to move around."

Tips for Teaching and Learning:

1. Use kinesthetic rehearsal techniques.
2. Use **gesture** for initial experiences with kinesthetics, especially to build choral tone and to teach vocal technique, and it is also very valuable to teach expression and ensemble artistry.
3. Use **movement in space**, after tone is established, to increase musical awareness and individual expression/ensemble artistry.
4. Use **movement in place** sparingly, perhaps as a means to practice initial physical connection to musical material, but move quickly to **gesture** and **movement in space**, which students view as more effective.
5. **Know music well before using movement:** "If we know the pieces well enough it's effective...."
6. **Slow, legato songs seem to encourage the most comfortable connections:**
 - "Certain songs worked better than others in the movement in-space activities. I think slower, melodic songs should also be performed without movement and with eyes closed, focusing on the mix of voices. Then you could add movement to it."
7. **Movement can distract some students from their focus on tone production, musical accuracy and expressiveness; however, continued practice improves their ability to multi-task.**
 - "Yes, sometimes positive and sometimes negative. Energy goes up which is often good, but I don't give the same focus to tone quality."
 - "I think my vocal tone is decreased, just because I have started to think about other things. However, my musicality and style is greatly increased. This has also gotten easier with some practice."
 - "I noticed a great improvement of our ability to be flexible with movement over time."
 - "As we get more comfortable with the exercises I think it becomes even more beneficial! Cool project. Very helpful."
8. **Provide opportunities for students to experiment and find their own kinesthetics.**
 - "I would prefer to be able to choose what movements I am doing because the same things don't work for everyone."
 - "...are only effective for me when they are organic and I am not being instructed on what to do...."
9. **How to transfer kinesthetic experiences of rehearsal to typical stationary setting of concert performance?**
 - "A valuable investigation could also be in how to bring the energy of kinetic singing into a stationary setting, like a concert."

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Somagwaza

He who carries a spear no longer needs his mother.

Traditional South African Song

1

2

3

So-mag-wa-za man

Ah weh, ah weh So-mag-wa-za Ah weh, ah weh So-mag-wa-za

7

Ah man yo - weh, ah man yo - weh So - mag - wa - za

yo - weh, yo - weh So - mag - wa - za man

Ah weh, ah weh So - mag - wa - za

Hold last time.

10

Ah man yo - weh, ah man yo - weh So - mag - wa - za

yo - weh, yo - weh So - mag - wa - za

Ah weh, ah weh So - mag - wa - za