

Background of the Wisconsin Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance Project (est. 1977)

Antecedents to the Wisconsin Project

Good music teaching has always helped students grow in the areas of knowledge, skill, and feeling. Throughout the history of music education in the United States, there have been many contributions to comprehensive teaching made by music education leaders, textbook authors, and outstanding conductors and teachers. Following are some of the projects and publications that preceded and influenced the formulation of the Wisconsin Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance Project.

The **Young Composers Project**, 1959, sponsored by the Ford Foundation and administered by Norman DelloJoio and Grant Beglarian, placed composers in the public schools for the purpose of composing for the school's performance ensembles. Students in these ensembles shared in the creation and compositional process of new works created by the composers in-residence¹

The **Yale Seminar**, 1963, sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education, sought to both broaden the repertoire for study in schools and deepen the experience through more comprehensive study. Performing, composing, listening, and dancing (movement) were described as the building blocks of musicality.²

The **Contemporary Musicianship Project (CMP)**, 1963-69, co-sponsored by MENC and the Ford Foundation, sought to expand and broaden the start made by the Young Composers Project.³ The CMP seminar at Northwestern University, 1965, was organized to re-evaluate and improve the musical education of teachers by looking at the content and orientation of required college core courses in music theory and history.⁴ The Eastman School of Music seminar, 1969, gave college teachers a chance to explore and experience a variety of approaches to the pedagogy of comprehensive musicianship.⁵

The **Tanglewood Symposium**, 1967, sponsored by MENC, Boston University, the Theodore Presser Foundation, and the Berkshire Music Center, was a seminal event that challenged almost all of the basic tenets on which music education in the schools was based. Although the Tanglewood Symposium did not address comprehensive musicianship head-on, it was a strong force for broadening the types of music studied, paying more attention to the musical needs of individual students, and changing the nature of teacher preparation.⁶ An offshoot of the Tanglewood,

The **Youth Music Project**, 1969, organized by Emmet Sarig, Director of Continuing Education and Music, U. Wisconsin, and sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education, brought school music teachers face to face with the need to deal with popular and rock music in their communities.⁷

¹ Contemporary Music Project, *An Anthology of Evolving Thought* (Washington, DC: MENC, 1971) p. 3

² U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, *Music In Our Schools: Report of the the Yale Seminar on Music Education* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1964).

³ Contemporary Music Project, *An Anthology of Evolving Thought* (Washington, DC: MENC, 1971), p. 31

⁴ Ibid, p. 109

⁵ Ibid, p. 111

⁶ Robert A. Choate, ed. *Documentary Report of the Tanglewood Symposium* (Washington DC: MENC, 1968).

⁷ NEED TO LOCATE MEJ ARTICLE ABOUT THIS

The **Manhattanville Project**, 1965-1970, shepherded by Ronald Thomas, built a curricular model with discovery and musical creation at its core rather than being on the periphery. Manhattanville developed a spiral sequence of activities (cycles) aimed at developing comprehensive musicians who could improvise, compose, perform, listen and describe, and understand their work in a larger context.⁸

The **Hawaii Comprehensive Musicianship Program**, 1967-1972, was an outgrowth of CMP written by Leon Burton, William Thomson, and Vernon Read. This program provided a series of courses for grades K-12 based on selected literature complete with objectives, teaching strategies, materials, activities, additional repertory, and evaluation.^{9,10}

Teaching Musicianship in the High School Band, 1972, by Joseph Labuta sought to apply some of the CMP principles to the daily tasks of teaching high school band.¹¹

Blueprint for Band, 1976, by Robert Garofalo put comprehensive musicianship into a band directors' template that included the performance of a composition surrounded by understanding of the structural elements, knowledge of music as a creative art form in a historical context, and aural, dexterous, and translative skills.^{12,13}

The Need

The National Standards for Music Education challenge music educators & students to strive for a broader and more in-depth understanding of music.¹⁴ Clearly, some traditional approaches to learning music, particularly in performing groups, need to be re-examined and re-structured. However, this need has not become apparent just recently.

As stated in the CMP Mission & Beliefs above, research into performing group curricula and instructional procedures over the past 25 years makes it quite clear that the development of performance skills and the actual performance of music does not necessarily lead to meaningful or lasting understanding. Also, while the quality of music literature has an important impact on the aesthetic responses experienced by students, "high quality" music literature does not guarantee a higher level of musical understanding. This realization, along with the work identified in the "Antecedents..." section above, led to a partnership between the Wisconsin Music Educators Association, the Wisconsin School Music Association, and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction for the purposes of developing school - based models of "comprehensive musicianship" teaching and providing professional development opportunities to affect expansion of these models to others.

⁸ Ronald D. Thomas, *MMCP Synthesis: A Structure for Music Education* (Elnora, NY: Media Inc., 1971)

⁹ Leon Burton, *The Comprehensive Musicianship Program* (Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1972).

¹⁰ Roy E. Ernst, *A Taxonomical Analysis of Selected Units of the Hawaii Comprehensive Musicianship Program* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1974).

¹¹ Joseph Labuta, *Teaching Musicianship in the High School Band* (West Nyack, NY: Parker Publishing, 1972)

¹² Robert Garofalo, "Blueprint for Band," *Music Educators Journal* (November, 1973) pp. 38-42.

¹³ Robert Garofalo, *Blueprint for Band* (Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Meredith Music Publications, 1976).

¹⁴ National Standards in Music Education, MENC: the National Association for Music Education, Reston, VA. 1995.

In spite of philosophical statements within the music education profession that “general music” should be the core of the school music program, performing groups continue as the foundation of the school music program in the majority of middle and high schools. For many middle and high school students, a performing ensemble of some kind provides the most likely setting through which to accomplish national, state or local standards in music. Therefore, “performance with understanding,” realized through existing school music performing groups, continues as a primary goal of the Wisconsin CMP Project.

The National Standards for Music Education have already made significant contributions to the music education profession, as well as the teaching and learning of music. One of the most significant contributions is their value as a means to communicate the developmental nature of music learning to music educators and others. Certainly, every music educator would like to work in an environment which allows for sequential, developmental, continuous learning in music. The reality of today’s schools, student priorities and family lifestyles often prevent this from happening. The need for flexibility, creativity and careful planning are essential for the modern music educator. This was recognized very early in the Wisconsin CMP Project and led to development of the “CMP Planning Model.”

The CMP Planning Model takes into account the above needs along with the critical need for flexibility of curriculum, thoughtful selection of literature and variety in instructional strategies for today’s music educators. While allowing the teacher to utilize local, state or national standards and curricula and work toward the outcomes identified in these resources, the CMP Planning Model does not dictate that these outcomes must be the starting point. Rather, the teacher and students have the flexibility and responsibility to determine an appropriate starting point based on the needs, teaching/learning environment and resources of the situation. In this way, the CMP Planning Model is an important component in the process of developing “performance with understanding” and fulfilling the mission of the Wisconsin Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance Project.

Formulation of the CMP Project

Clearly, the partnership of organizations which fund the Wisconsin CMP Project seek to initiate change – change in philosophy, goals and strategies for music education through performing groups. The partnership consists of The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, The Wisconsin Music Educators Association and the Wisconsin School Music Association. These organizations provide funding, leadership in the form of a steering committee representing the three organizations, and continuity for long term development of the Project. Of the variety of strategies which can be utilized to generate change on a statewide level, the Wisconsin CMP project selected the following strategies: model program development, documentation and dissemination.

In this case, the “models” are teachers. Selection of the “models” is done through peer nomination to establish credibility for the later dissemination phase. In the beginning stages of the CMP Project, a letter and nomination form was sent to all middle and high school band and choir directors in the fall of 1976. Any director was invited to nominate one or more other middle or high school music directors to be part of the project. Several criteria were provided with the most important one being the performance quality of the director’s school music performing group. The project steering committee selected eight

directors for the project based on these nominations: two each from middle school band, middle school choir, high school band and high school choir.

Selected participants were invited to planning meetings during the school year and a retreat in the summer of 1977. During these times together, participants were led through an analysis of their own teaching behavior and their perception of student learning. Based on the mission and beliefs of the CMP Project, participants discussed the importance of music selection and developed a planning model for music instruction in performing groups. They then analyzed scores, extracted learning outcomes from the music and wrote teaching strategies. In addition to improving their own skill at applying the CMP Planning Model to selected literature, the participants discovered the value of planning with others rather than alone.

An informal “contract” was developed between the eight participants and the steering committee. There was agreement that each participant would

- implement two teaching plans during the next school year.
- Apply the CMP model to two additional compositions.
- Keep a log of teacher behavior and student response related to CMP activities.
- Attend several evening meetings to discuss progress and refine plans.

The CMP Project Steering Committee agreed to

1. conduct on site visits to each participant’s classroom.
2. Interview students and the teachers during the on-site visit.
3. Secure administrative support for the teacher’s continued involvement.

There were three common insights from the on-site visits:

- Students learned more than teachers expected or realized.
- Students attitude toward CMP involvement varied, but was generally positive.
- The variety and scope of performing groups experiences and strategies increased considerably.

At the end of the school year, the CMP Project teachers were each asked to write a personal statement about their experience. The excerpts from those statements printed below provide insight into both the intent and the potential results of application of the CMP philosophy and model.

The greatest impact of the CMP Project has been personal. That is, it has made a difference in the way I approach teaching, as well as the way I feel about teaching. My approach is now broader and probably more intellectual; I am more excited about my work, especially about communicating the more cognitive and aesthetic aspects of music learning...

High School Band Director

Without a doubt, the greatest challenge in the CMP-oriented approach is to the teacher who must explore and prepare the music more thoroughly than ever before, and strive always to keep the larger picture of total music education in mind. In this challenge lies the satisfaction...

High School Choir Director

The CMP Project has influenced me to do the following:

- select and analyze music more critically
- constantly be looking for new ways of teaching
- create a more musically exciting environment
- teach in a more organized fashion
- be flexible and more spontaneous during the rehearsal
- constantly keep in mind the broader goals...

Middle School Choir Director

Some of my most rewarding results were encountered during solo-ensemble time. I found that students were more receptive and apt to retain ideas when working individually or in smaller ensembles than they were during the full group rehearsals. I plan on making listening assignments a regular part of the band coursework and will see that there is a listening room as part of our new music facility...

High School Band Director

Involvement in the CMP Project has made me a much more inquisitive learner, a more enthusiastic transmitter and guide, and has frustrated me terribly, at times, in that there are such limitations of time to accomplish the goals set forth...

Middle School Band Director

During meetings and workshops attended by the original participants, the CMP Planning Model was refined and affirmed as a planning model, not a curriculum. For the second full year of the CMP Project, two orchestra directors were added to the participants. Implementation with their own school music performing groups continued for all participants and development of appropriate assessment procedures became an additional

focus of the CMP process. The direction of the Project moved toward outreach and dissemination.

Outreach and Dissemination

Since the two-year pilot project, the primary goal of the Wisconsin Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance Project focuses on outreach and dissemination of the process model that has been created. This is accomplished in a variety of ways: a) summer workshops for band, choir, and orchestra teachers, b) short-term inservices in school districts throughout the state, c) weekend one- and two-day workshops, sessions at conferences and conventions, d) articles in magazines, e) dissertations and theses, f) publications, g) influencing university and college pre-service methods, and h) a strong “word-of-mouth” network.

The project staff feels it is important to immerse teachers in the *process model*, so they can apply that 5-point model to their own teaching situations. The notion of creating a *curriculum* was rejected during the pilot stage because it did not offer the flexibility that teachers needed to adapt the idea to their own strengths, their unique teaching needs, and the nature of their students, communities and ensembles. Change occurs best with greater immersion, so the weeklong summer workshop is inherently more powerful than a shorter experience. Short-term inservices, conference sessions, and articles are used as teasers to interest teachers in attending a complete weeklong workshop.

Summer workshops have become the mainstay of the Wisconsin CMP project. These weeklong workshops offered almost every year are built around teachers bringing several pieces of literature they plan to perform with one of their ensembles during the next year. During the workshop, there are sessions on each of the five points of the process (Selection, Analysis, Outcomes, Strategies, and Assessment), and they are asked to apply the process to the pieces they brought with them.¹⁵ Another interesting feature of many of the summer workshops is inclusion of guest faculty brought in from other parts of the country.¹⁶ Over a period of twenty years, the summer workshops have served as a training ground for CMP staff teachers who learn a great deal from watching each other and from honing their own presentation skills. Real performance and music making of various sorts is included in almost every session during the week, and participants have opportunities to expand their horizons through eurhythmies, improvisation, international folk dance, simulation games, and other learning strategies.

Teacher inservices are held in school districts throughout the state. Originally these were done by the pilot project teachers and steering committee, but as more teachers have been involved, they are now often done by someone who has attended a summer workshop and has successfully implemented the CMP model in their program. Because these workshops are presented by respected peer teachers, acceptance of the ideas moves faster.

Weekend and evening workshops have the advantage of being voluntary with more time available. They also allow more time for participating teachers to absorb and apply the model to their own circumstances. The format for these workshops is often a miniature

¹⁵ During the workshops, as teachers became more sensitive to the need for choosing quality literature for their ensembles, they felt the need to reject some of the lesser quality literature they had brought with them. Teaching staff always had a stack of extra literature for just this purpose. In this way, the level of literature studied throughout the state was gradually raised over a period of time.

¹⁶ Roy Ernst, Alice Parker, Stan DeRusha,

version of the summer workshop in that it presents the five points of the model, demonstrates it through inspired teaching, and asks participants to apply it to literature.

State Conference sessions on CMP have been a yearly part of the Wisconsin CMP project since 1978. Due to the short length of these sessions, they are usually targeted at specific populations (such as band, choir, or orchestra) and levels of teaching. The most successful sessions often persuade attendees not so much because of the CMP idea but because of the comprehensive and inspired teaching model that is displayed by the clinician. The original judgment of seeking out the finest teachers to become pilot teachers and later staff, has proven to be a valid strategy. Sessions on the project have also been featured at MENC divisional and national conferences and inservices as well as many state MEAs outside of Wisconsin.

Magazine articles on CMP appear regularly and have since the inception of the project. Along the way, the project has earned the status of being a regular column in *The Wisconsin School Musician* written by a variety of people. On occasion, whole issues of the *Wisconsin School Musician* have featured the Wisconsin CMP idea.¹⁷ Members have written articles for many national and state journals including the *Music Educators Journal*, *Teaching Music*, *Florida Music Educator*, and many others.¹⁸

Later Developments

A major challenge in any effort at educational reform is to sustain the effort long enough to truly have an impact. This is accomplished in the Wisconsin CMP Project in several ways. First, through a renewable leadership structure. The CMP Project Steering Committee continues but the personnel changes periodically. For instance, some “lead” teachers selected for the CMP Project eventually become part of the Steering Committee. Every 5-6 years, a new group of approximately 10 potential “lead” teachers is identified and provided with training workshops led by “experienced” CMP Project teachers. From the original 8 teachers, the pool of CMP Project “lead” teachers has grown to over 20. These teachers are often selected from among those who distinguished themselves during participation in CMP Summer Workshops. This renewal of “lead” teachers has sustained the Wisconsin CMP Project for over 20 years.

The agenda of the annual CMP Project Steering Committee meeting always includes strategies for infusing the “performance with understanding” philosophy into on-going music activities within Wisconsin. Wisconsin solo and ensemble festivals involve over 180,000 students each year at the district and state levels. The influence of the CMP Project can be seen in several ways. For instance, new solos and ensemble events such as “Creative Jazz Combo” and “Folk or Ethnic Ensemble” have been added to stimulate more creativity and diversity. Also, students are encouraged to compose and perform their own compositions in any solo or ensemble category. Exceptional solo performances at the state solo and ensemble festivals in Wisconsin can earn a student the opportunity to audition for a summer clinic scholarship. The format for the audition requires students to answer questions regarding the music they performed. The questions were formulated by the CMP Project Steering Committee and are published early in the school year so students can do special study or research. Students respond to two of the questions during the audition – one in writing and one verbally and the questions are revised annually. The following questions were used for the 1999-2000 school year:

Questions for Student Response

1. *Where are the places in the piece which you feel are especially exciting or intense? What is it in the music that creates this effect?*

¹⁷ Wisconsin School Musician (GET DATE OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE).

¹⁸ LIST SOME OF THE ARTICLES HERE

2. *What is the form of this piece? Use your music to describe how the piece is organized.*
3. *How does the composer create contrast or sustain interest?*
4. *What is the meaning of the text and how does the music reflect the text?*
5. *What aspects of the piece are typical or atypical of the composer and the style period?*
6. *What makes this a quality piece of music. Give examples to support your response.*
7. *What technical challenges did you need to overcome to perform this piece effectively?
Why do you think the composer included these challenges?*

What kind of responses might we expect from students? While they vary a great deal, these examples illustrate a growth toward “performance with understanding.” In response to question #1:

In his “Symphony Espagnole,” Edward Lalo creates an exciting atmosphere with a variety of techniques. From the start of the piece with the use of repeated octaves progressing upward, Lalo begins a pattern of upward progressions designed to draw in the listeners ear. The best example of Lalo’s use of repeated patterns of notes, however, may be found in the very last measures of the piece. This technique evokes a sense of anticipation in the listener, drawing attention to the climax at the end of the upward progression...The most exciting part of the piece in my mind is the section from E to F. In this part, the soloist creates an exciting and rapid harmony to the orchestra’s melody. With its many quick arpeggios and rapid progression of phrases designed to draw the listeners ear onward, this section represents Lalo’s genius in his ability to excite.

In response to question #5:

“Marcello’s Sonata in F Major” has several aspects which are typical of the period in which it was written. The first movement has two repeated sections. Typical of the times, the section is first played forte, then repeated piano. One of the reasons this was done was because harpsichords (used for accompaniment) only had two settings: forte or piano. After playing the section through at one dynamic level, the harpsichordist would have to change the instrument’s setting..A most interesting aspect is the fact that the piece is supposed to be like the human spoken voice. Unlike romantic music, which was written to sound like a singing human voice, this piece is played as though it were a spoken voice, something which was characteristic of Marcello’s time.

At district solo and ensemble festivals in Wisconsin, students are now expected to introduce their selection and provide the audience with some suggestions for “informed” listening. These various additions to the music festival format provide students with opportunity to develop a broader view of the performing experience and to develop a higher level of musical independence.

As a model for other teachers, CMP Project participants frequently present concerts at state music educator conventions. The format of these concerts exemplifies the CMP Project philosophy in various ways – through the literature performed, the format of the concert, the leadership of students, the involvement of a composer or arranger, and performance of student works. To provide a convenient resource for teacher inservice at

the local level, the CMP Project Committee developed a video which explains and demonstrates the CMP Planning Model.

Outreach and dissemination for the Wisconsin CMP Project will continue long into the future because it is driven by ideas, common sense and a broader vision of what music education through performing groups can be. The leadership structure provides for continuity and the number of music educators who have attended workshops and implemented the CMP Model in their rehearsals continues to grow. The most common feedback from these teachers is that once they understand and apply the CMP Model, their approach to teaching music through performing groups will never be the same.