





Summer Enrichment for Teachers

by Catherine Nadon-Gabrion



What makes summer workshops and courses such good opportunities? Perhaps it seems that you get the most for your time and money during the summer.



Certainly the array of summer offerings is impressive when compared with opportunities available during the academic year. Have you noticed how much more enjoyable it is to attend workshops when you are not pressed by both the rigors of a teaching schedule and other responsibilities such as home and family? Time seems more available in the summer, getting away for a week or two is feasible, and focusing energy on personal and professional growth becomes a more realistic option. When you arrive at a workshop, it is

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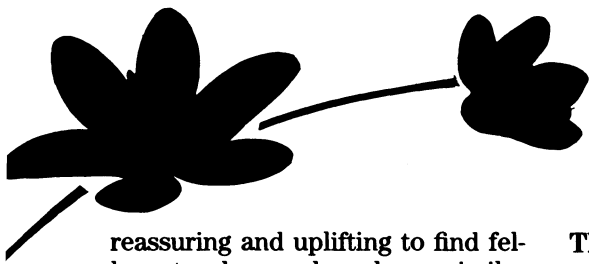


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reassuring and uplifting to find fellow teachers who share similar concerns about teaching music and who are also seeking new ideas and skills that will make their professional efforts more effective.

Why attend?

First, you should determine your motivation for taking a summer course or workshop. What is the need? Perhaps an external issue, such as earning credit required for renewal of the teaching certificate or a local school district mandate, is your reason for summer study. Perhaps it is time to earn those few credits remaining to complete your graduate degree. The need may be a more personal one, such as the desire to develop new skills, acquire in-depth expertise in a methodology, or simply renew your energy and creativity. Whatever your motives, identifying the reason for summer study will help you determine which is the most appropriate workshop or course for your purposes.

Summer study comes in many forms, from the six- to eight-week course to the short-term workshop that ranges from two or three days to several weeks. Workshops differ from summer courses in that they provide brief, focused, educational opportunities and intensive experiences emphasizing active participation. Workshops are designed for personal and professional development, and they generally cover knowledge, skills, or attitudes that can be presented during a brief period. Attending a workshop should result in increased learning and high-quality musical experiences for the student. Usually, there are no criteria for admission to a workshop unless the program is part of a sequence of offerings (such as the Orff or Kodály certification programs) that requires participants to have specific skills or experience. Workshops are integral to the whole notion of in-service or professional development; through such offerings, teachers can increase their effectiveness and job satisfaction by learning new skills and teaching techniques.

The short-term workshop

Workshops usually generate a high level of energetic participation through a fast-paced agenda and limited time. The presenter will have a relatively focused goal and provide a set of experiences that participants can use immediately, thus making participants perceive the time investment as being well spent. Some activities will serve as models for transfer to different materials and situations. Other activities may generate new ideas and perceptions, create an awareness of sources for new teaching materials and strategies, stimulate divergent thinking, provide enrichment, or boost morale. This is a valid learning experience as long as "change"—a long-term process—is not the goal.

Among the problems of the short-term workshop is the limited perspective a participant may develop about a philosophy or methodology being presented. The high-powered "glitz" or enthusiasm may be a deterrent to recognizing the breadth of the process and the need for organizing the activities into a sequential concept- and skill-development plan. Many individuals never go beyond the introductory-level experience, and this limits their perspective of the breadth, content, and sequence of the curriculum. The typical half-day introductory Orff workshop is a good example. Such a brief presentation can hardly address the process or curriculum of the *Schulwerk* in adequate detail to provide the participant with a vision beyond the notion that it evolves around pentatonic songs and playing ostinato patterns on barred instruments.

The same is true of the Kodály concept, Dalcroze, and other skill-based processes. Unless time is committed to developing skills and an understanding of both the philosophy and practice, the "new" practitioner will function with only limited awareness. Introductory workshops that establish awareness of the long-term training necessary for developing skills and that generate enthusiasm and commitment to such a process, however,

provide a great service to the profession.

Summer courses

A summer course is usually longer in duration than is a workshop and is more likely to include in-depth methodology, pedagogy, skill development, or research into historical, theoretical, or philosophical issues. Such study provides the kind of time required to make changes in behavior and influence the development of skills in performance and creative endeavors. Time to read, think, and apply new knowledge or skills is a reasonable expectation for those who participate in long-term summer study. As in workshops, the goals of instructors of these courses include increased teacher effectiveness and high-quality musical experiences for students. Participants in longer courses, however, have more time and are given more personal guidance in developing and implementing the new techniques and skills that are taught.

The length of a workshop or course will influence greatly the degree to which changes in behavior can be achieved and new skills learned. For example, a one-week workshop that focuses on the development and practice of desired skills probably will not be long enough to guarantee a change in routine teacher behavior. Changes in behavior require individuals to participate in a more personal developmental process, to put forth a long-term effort, and to receive follow-up monitoring and support. Therefore, if you wish to develop specific skills of performance or pedagogy, then it is best to select a workshop or course of appropriate duration to achieve such goals. Short-term workshops of a day or two are usually most effective for becoming acquainted with new materials, collecting a potpourri of teaching ideas, and generating enthusiasm. You should review the course or workshop topic, title, description, and duration carefully when determining which offering will be most effective in helping you achieve your goals.

What's right for you?

Each spring you will find numerous opportunities for summer study advertised in *MEJ*, in state music journals, and in many other professional music journals. In addition, you will probably receive a plethora of flyers and brochures announcing a wide range of workshops; certification programs in such approaches as Orff, Kodály, Dalcroze, and Suzuki; and special-emphasis activities such as choreography for the show choir, general music for high school students, beginning string techniques, the art and craft of instrumental music teaching, and technology for the music class.

Finding the right workshop or summer study opportunity will require some research to identify the opportunity that will best meet your needs. Contact with sponsoring organizations, such as universities, professional education organizations, and publishers, can be beneficial. Find out what is available, the focus, and the expectations. The following is a brief overview of the kinds of activities often sponsored by these organizations:

University programs usually provide a broad range of options. Regular course offerings are often supplemented with short-term seminars that address current trends and issues and reflect research that has relevance for more effective teaching practice. Universities frequently sponsor certification programs that offer various levels of knowledge about the methodologies of Orff, Kodály, and Dalcroze as well as about other specialized fields of study. In addition, you are likely to find a wide range of short-term workshop opportunities in the areas of technology, teaching methods and materials, choral and instrumental conducting, rehearsal strategies, and literature review. The faculty for these offerings includes resident professors or guest faculty members who have distinguished themselves as specialists in their fields.

State and national professional organizations, both music and general education, frequently sponsor seminars and workshops that focus

on specific and systematic approaches to the teaching and learning process. Cooperative learning and the Instructional Theory Into Practice (ITIP) model of Madeline Hunter are current concepts in general education. Numerous workshops and seminars will be offered this summer addressing these topics. As school districts focus on ways to improve the educational climate, arts specialists are encouraged by their administrators to participate in such training.

Other valuable resources for developing awareness of new music literature, textbooks, and the software for technology are *publisher- and manufacturer-sponsored offerings*. Presenters of these workshops are frequently the composers, authors, or creators of the materials being presented. They are often nationally distinguished educators who provide active leadership for the profession. In addition, these presentations often are inspirational and provide opportunities to share ideas and develop networks of like-minded educators. Short-term presentations may have as specific a focus as that of the Fred Waring Choral Workshops, sponsored by Shawnee Press, or they may involve much broader topics, such as MIDI technology. They may also be as extensive in content as the Silver Burdett & Ginn Summer Workshops, which offer a range of electives such as general music, choral techniques, producing a school musical, music games, and movement. These presentations frequently are held on college and university campuses and offer graduate credit.

The right choice

During the selection process, it is important to consider personal and professional needs and goals along with any constraints of time, travel, or cost. The best choice will be the one that fulfills defined needs. This is an investment of time, energy, and money; therefore, your choice should produce some desired benefits for you and for your students. To identify your particular needs, ask yourself questions like, "What

do I hope to gain from this experience? Are my needs instructional or curricular? Am I seeking to renew my enthusiasm for teaching, or do I want to develop new skills or changes in my teaching behavior?" The answers to these questions should influence your choice of summer study, both in terms of the amount of time you commit and the type of workshop you select.

Having determined the focus of study, you must next choose your program from among the numerous offerings of topics. Some informal criteria to use in this selection process can include knowledge of the presenter, reputation of the summer program, and the program's success rate for attracting participants and colleagues. It is usually safe to choose offerings that have a history of success or a well-known faculty.

In the cases of special certification programs, such as the Orff, Kodály, Suzuki, Dalcroze, and Weikart Movement Education programs, it is best to contact the established centers that offer this training. If you are unable to attend classes at a center such as the Kodály Center of America (KCA) or the Kodály Musical Training Institute (KMTI), these organizations can probably recommend other approved centers where all levels of training are available. Receiving certification from a recognized center reflects understanding of both the philosophy and process of a given methodology and denotes a high degree of achievement.

A window of opportunity

Summer is, indeed, a time for renewal. A window of opportunity can be opened through the impressive variety of high-quality summer offerings. The seed that was planted and nurtured as you became a teacher may need some nourishment and tending so that your teaching can remain strong and healthy. Invest in yourself and make your professional life more effective and fulfilling. Summer study can be one of the best uses of your resources, and it can help you become an even better educator. ☐

