

**Exploring Our Roots, Expanding our Future**  
Volume 1: Lesson 3  
Brian Crisp

**INSTRUCTIONAL: LESSON THREE**

**Introduction**

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Sing the instrumental piece from the previous lesson as the students enter the room. Using the text will prompt the use of rhythmic building bricks for the forthcoming improvisation. Ask the students why the bell was rung (of course, tea is needed). Introduce the following tea names through echo imitation. Have the students repeat each tea name four times:

Cranberry Cove

Strawberry Peppermint

Lemonberry Zinger

Harvest Chamomile

**Exploration**

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Begin to arrange the tea names in a pattern using only two of the flavors. Have the students continue to echo imitate:

Cranberry Cove	Harvest Chamomile	Cranberry Cove	Harvest Chamomile
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Repeat this several times. Ask the students to arrange two of the tea names into a pattern with a partner. Invite the partners to share their tea flavor patterns. Students will need to say the flavors rhythmically.

When all the partners have shared their flavor patterns, make a pattern using three of the tea flavors. Repeat this several times having the children echo imitate each time:

Harvest Chamomile	Cranberry Cove	Harvest Chamomile	Strawberry Peppermint
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Ask the partners to share with other partners and check each other's work. When everyone has shared, have them combine to make groups of four. These groups can now make a pattern using three of the four tea flavors. Some students can do this by having blank boxes drawn on a white board. Some students may

need cards representing the tea flavors. Small cards can easily be made and distributed to partners. Have the students rhythmically say their patterns. This will give you an opportunity to check their work. Providing a steady beat on a small drum can assist students with rhythmic speech.

Speech will provide the rhythmic material for the compositions of unpitched percussion that will accompany the previously learned barred instrument piece. Secure and accurate rhythm coupled with artistic speech transfers precisely to body percussion. Have the students clap the rhythm of their tea flavor patterns. Repeat until this is secure. Students should share their clapping and speaking and assess their progress based on rhythmic accuracy, artistry, and tempo. Repeat this several times.

Now ask the students to change the ending of their pattern to “Cranberry Cove.” This will provide the pattern with a rhythmic cadence:

Strawberry Peppermint	Harvest Chamomile	Strawberry Peppermint	Cranberry Cove
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Students will easily make this change and return to playing the rhythm with clapping. When this is secure, invite the students to use two levels of body percussion—stomping, patting, clapping, and snapping. Perform this step several times until the body percussion is accurate and artfully played (loud body percussion does not transfer well to unpitched instruments). As a final step, have the students use three levels of body percussion to play their tea flavor patterns. Some students may want to use four and this should be an option for groups that need the challenge. Encourage students to play one level of body percussion per tea flavor.

Have each group perform its body percussion while other groups listen and evaluate for tempo, levels of body percussion utilized, and pattern recognition. Recognizing the tea patterns is a form of aural rhythmic decoding and an important step toward music literacy.

After each group has performed and evaluated, invite the students to transfer their patterns to unpitched percussion. The timbres of the maracas, djembe, ashiko, and tambourine will complement the rhythmic exercise and the timbre of the barred instrument piece. Students should be instructed that each tea name should be played on only one instrument (or as body percussion).

Give each group the opportunity to perform its unpitched percussion piece.

### **Culminating Aesthetic Moment**

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Perform each group’s unpitched percussion piece in Rondo form with the melody from the barred instrument piece functioning as the A section of the Rondo. The melody can be played on the recorder or sung by the teacher. At this point, students should concentrate solely on the accuracy and artistry of their compositions:

Barred instrument melody	Unpitched percussion composition	Barred instrument melody	Unpitched percussion composition
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Repeat this and have the students evaluate their performances. Explain to the students that the next time they come to music class, they will combine their movements, their drum piece, and the barred instrument piece into one large piece. This will create excitement about the forthcoming composition.

## Reflection for Learning

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Self evaluation is critical for students. These lessons are constructed with the current thought about teaching, learning, and assessment as the principles for lifelong learning. Ron Berger's *An Ethic of Excellence: Creating a Culture of Craftsmanship in the Classroom* emphasizes important elements of arts based teaching. Berger accentuates the use of student models. Student models are critical. This allows students to have examples from which to draw ideas and it also lets them understand and acknowledge excellent performances. As students create, perform, and evaluate each other, it allows them to participate in a rich work that has an authentic audience. Thus, their work is not solely a cerebral exercise, rather an authentic one in the context of the performance.

## Assessment

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Engaging students in conversation about music and why music works is critical. Through dialogue, children enter into the knowledge of a discipline. Fostering wonder and exploration about a subject empowers children to courageously engage with the unknown. This courage will fuel the need to move from wonder and exploration into the search for knowledge. This attitude allows us to explore some big questions about music:

How do rhythmic units combine to make an effective composition?

How do timbre choices affect the composition?

Why does tempo affect a composition?

These are a few examples of questions that will provoke students to offer theories. At this point, the scientific accuracy of the theory is not as important as the theory itself. Children's theories are full of wonder and amazement. The pedagogue should simply foster the creation of these theories and ask critical questions that will lead the children to reason and logic rather than the "right answer." Here is an example from my second grade classroom:

Brian: I'm curious—this composition was played on triangle, maracas, and tambourine. How was this choice made?

Ella: We thought it sounded nice.

Mark: It wasn't heavy.

Brian: I heard you say it wasn't heavy and it sounded nice. What makes a composition sound nice?

Ella: The instruments, the players, the piece...

Mark: The instruments, definitely.

Jack: How you play them.

Brian: It sounds as if there are many elements that lead to a satisfying composition. I agree that this composition was played artfully.

Rachel: It's surprising, too, because we are the only group that didn't use the drum. Our piece was light.

Brian: I agree that those timbres are light. Why did you not play drums?

Ella: Our piece was too fast!

Brian: I hear you saying your piece was fast. Was it faster than the other compositions?

Liza: (who was in another group) No, no.

Mark: We weren't faster, our notes were faster because we used more "ta-tes" (eighth notes).

Brian: So your piece was more rhythmically active?

Jack: Yes and the notes sounded cleaner on the shakers and metals.

Brian: How can we be sure your piece is the most rhythmically active?

Mark: We could listen to the pieces.

Ella: Yeah.

Brian: True. Is this the only way?

Jeremiah: No, we could write ours down and look at them.

At this point, the class begins decoding their examples.

The above conversation demonstrates several important elements of the Schulwerk. Literacy has its place after the composition is played and fully understood. The need for literacy presented itself in the children's theories about timbre and rhythmic activity. It is not critical that the theory about rhythmic activity and timbre is correct. The critical aspect is that the children want to find ways to test their theory, and from this testing, aural and visual decoding was a necessity. These conversations of assessment promote a culture that demonstrates what children know and how they know it.