

Japanese Special High School Students' Reflections on 9-11: Reflective Practice of Violin Group Instruction

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this study, the authors describe the reflective practices of a violin group instruction session that evolved into a mixed ensemble lesson in which the participants at a Japanese special high shared thoughts and feelings about the 9-11 terrorist attack in New York City. The lesson originally planned for a group violin instruction; however, the students and teacher co-created and arranged the lessons into a mixed ensemble practice in order to share their thoughts concerning the disaster victims. While students were learning the violins, T, by coincidence, found a lyric along with chord progression indicated on a sheet of paper set on a music stand in the corner of the classroom. The name of the song was "Hanamizuki," the popular Japanese song by Yo Hitoto dedicated to the victims of 9-11. This chapter presents how the teacher's reflective practice and students' active involvement co-created the contents of the class and made an unexpected connection through a song they learned about 9-11.

INTRODUCTION

The study describes a lesson originally planned as a violin group class at a Japanese special high school. The original planned lesson evolved into a mixed ensemble lesson in which the participants shared their reflections, thoughts and feelings about 9-11. This lesson was originally planned as a group violin instruction; however, the students and teacher co-created and arranged the lesson into a mixed ensemble practice, to share their thoughts concerning the disaster victims of the 9-11 tragedy.

This evolution in the process occurred even though it involved a significant jump of logic and organization of the prepared lesson. Music lessons from string education shifted to singing in a mixed ensemble through the students' motivation. Students and the teacher co-guided one another to a discussion of the disaster.

As a result, both students and teacher collaborated and expanded a simple group violin instruction to create a connection with musical and interdisciplinary topics. The study addresses how students and teacher shared and developed the idea of *kyosei*, the Japanese term meaning *to understand each other, leave no one out, and make friends*, in and through musical practice.

Prince (2016) studied how addressing students' spontaneous questions and making comments may take a lesson on an unexpected tangent. Her study was conducted through interviews with twenty-five New York elementary school teachers. Her results indicated that most teachers perceive students' interruptions, restlessness, and seemingly off-topic comments or questions as cues to change gears or delve more deeply into a topic. Teachers felt that putting aside their scripts for a while, and forging connections between plan content and their students' experience enhanced teaching and learning. The ensuing reflective practice helped maintain student interest and allowed students to explore in pedagogical meaningful ways, (Prince, 2016).

Michie (1999) who became a teacher in a Chicago public school without any education training learned to listen to his students. In his book *Holla if You Hear Me* Michie (1999), improvised teaching in various ways to answer individual students' interests. According to Michie (1999), teaching requires constant reflection on students' interests towards their learning. Through daily communication with his students, Michie (1999) gradually found the best teaching for each student. For example, when Michie (1999) heard two girls singing a pop song in classroom, he came up with the idea of sharing the song with the class and letting them to find the meaning of the lyric (p.98). Michie (1999) also created a thematic and collaborative class with another teacher to give more meaning and depth in reading classes (p.74). In fact, teachers do not have to follow a preexisting teaching method or lesson plan all the time because there are always uncertainties in classroom (Michie, 1999). Teachers always face uncertainty so they always must seek a better way of teaching; the teaching professions requires a strong sense of reflection.

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