Eine Kleine Tagmusik: Music Education in the Berlin Public Schools

During the summer of 2008 I received a fellowship to research and teach music classes in the Berlin elementary school, Grundschule an der Bäke. While some aspects of music education proved to be universal, significant differences between music education in the United States and Germany were noted in philosophy, curriculum, methodology, teacher preparation, teaching assignments, class scheduling, technique and the continuation of music education beyond elementary school. All of these factors combined illustrate two very distinct systems of music education and much can be learned from a comparative analysis.

While almost all teachers continue to learn as they teach, throughout my teaching in Berlin I found that the learning experience while teaching was significantly heightened as I was teaching in an entirely foreign environment and educational structure, which challenged me view the system of music education in the United States from a different perspective and to consider what aspects of the system of music education in Germany I might want to adopt in my teaching back in the United States. My observations, experiences and lessons learned from my teaching in Berlin are the springboard for this presentation and the discussions that will ensue.

The goal of this presentation is to encourage dialogue among educators throughout the world in order to facilitate an exchange of ideas that will enhance the education of students in all countries involved. This forum would provide an opportunity to think critically and reflect on our system of education while thoughtfully comparing and contrasting our system with systems instituted successfully in other countries.

**UNITED STATES NATIONAL STANDARDS IN MUSIC EDUCATION**

1) Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2) Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3) Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4) Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5) Reading and notating music.
6) Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7) Evaluating music and music performances.
8) Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9) Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

**GERMANY NATIONAL STANDARDS IN MUSIC EDUCATION**

1) Creating, repeating and organizing music.
2) Listening to, understanding and arranging/organizing music.
3) Applying music.

**Considerations for International Comparisons**

1) Cultural, political, religious, economic and historic context of education
2) Role of education and specific subject-matter in society
3) Value placed on education and level of active advocacy on behalf of education in the community as well as in government
4) Structure of educational system
5) Students’ backgrounds and individual circumstances
6) Background and professional development of teachers
7) Congruence (or incongruence) between instruction and philosophical foundation of the educational institution.
8) Reception and application of learned materials by students
9) Personal biases as a researcher and observer