

Earthdance

Earthdance. Every single child who pops from the wombdrum ready to groove needs to be socialized for

earthdance/spiral-dance/trancedance
the inner circle of drummers
the outer circle of dancers
grounded in groove
extended family
singing you
on

I think of this goal as some kind of life insurance for the oncoming economically sustainable and paleoconservative centuries. If we help each child to feel the pleasure of 'groove locally', creating, being in flow, finding focus, capable of being completely individuated and completely part of a local social whole at one and the same moment, then we can 'cool globally' – at least slow the loss of species and cultural diversity. Eventually war will become archaic, an ancient his-story because no one will want to put on a uniform to kill or be killed [it used to be that a draft or a system of incentives were required to shape the poor and alienated into an army] in some distant land, and, just as important, no one will want to be a terrorist or a suicide bomber [now any one person can wield three different varieties of bio-, chemo- or nuclear weaponry any time any where].

I know, this may sound unrealistic, utopian, romantic, grandiose, but "the program" is really simple, humble and utterly practical because, as always, the best defense is still a good offense. The logic is impeccable: happy people, people experiencing pleasure and satisfaction in their creativity, will not crave the worst forms of power-over, will not want to participate in empires and "administrative massacres" (Arendt) or in terrorism.

Finally, we can not control an individual terrorist with big high tech 'stealth' airplanes and aircraft carriers and huge artillery and megahummers and monster tanks and battalions of troops and lasers in space. All of this technology and manpower is completely useless against anthrax letters, or a new form of computer virus, a new toxic mix of chemical agents, a freshly bioengineered airborne plague, a dirty nuke bomb in a briefcase, or the Prionic Cow Clones and Ice-9s of the future.

We can teach every child to drum.

We can teach every child the totems and taboos of the tribe.

And this child, if uncoerced, will co-invent a very local and very satisfying variant of the Earthdance that will keep him, Her and us out of big troubles like the ones we are currently in.

Groove locally. Cool globally.

Pat Campbell:

When all earth could be humming along, instead we know the sadness and pain that derives from human hatred. Violent crime rates by youth and even children have been consistently high for decades, due to a number of likely causes: inconsistent or

harsh parenting, poor peer relations, gang involvement, and the lack of strong connections to school, community, life-affirming institutions. For young delinquents, the solution has been to send them to boot camps and other sorts of “get tough” programs. Scare tactics don’t work, though, and getting tough on troubled kids has not been successful in eradicating or even reducing criminal behavior.

Squashing hatred and violence is a complicated process that requires the expertise of many trained specialists. We music teachers may not have training as counselors and therapists, but we *can* teach music. We can believe in and act upon the logical sequence that making music brings self-esteem and a sense of social belonging, which leads to fulfillment and joy. There is no time or space to conceive of doing ill, not when we are joined at the hip by the music we make with others. Remember the adage from the 1930s, “A boy that blows a trumpet will not blow a safe?” This belief in music’s benefits on disposition and direction has had some history, which of course goes back to the ancients, too. For those who ask, “How do *you* know?” and “Where’s the data?”, we can look to societies where music is embedded within the culture, where everyone is deemed musical, where music and dance happens around meals, in worship and ritual, at work, in play, and spontaneously at any time of the day. We can accept that a transformation of society through music, of bringing comradery through collaborative song, is no “quick and dirty” operation. Music-making, and the musical enculturation and education of children, takes time, energy, and love. (We might add funding, too, to pay the bills for instruments and teachers.) But there’s little time to waste, and we’d best dig deeply into what we can do now to allow music to permeate the lives of our children. We can collect the data as we go, of smiles and hugs, of small kindnesses and genuine acts of human compassion. We might not be surprised, either, to find that lots more music-making at early ages might show a significant reduction in the acts of hatred that plague us today.

Music in a time of tension, escalating violence, war. Is it beyond the realm of reason to consider music that soothes, tames the wilds away, brings about peace? We already do have data to indicate that music works in positive ways on attitude, mood, and self-image, and that it functions as a safety valve for venting anger and aggression. We see “at-risk” children and youth gaining direction and purpose through opportunities to express themselves in musically creative ways, individually and in the group. We teach music, and facilitate music into the lives of others, because of the hope and the living proof that musicking makes a difference.

* Need data? Read about music’s help to young people at-risk: Randall, Paula, 1997, Art Works! Prevention Programs for Youth and Communities. Tucson, AZ: La Frontera Center, Inc., and Taylor, Jack, Nancy Barry, and Kim Walls, 1997, From Research to the Music Classroom: Music and Students At-Risk: Creative Solutions for a National Dilemma. Reston VA: Music Educators National Conference. There is also a fascinating chapter by Ann Sloboda, “Music therapy and psychotic violence”, in A Practical Guide to Forensic Psychotherapy (1997, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers), edited by Estela V. Welldon and Cleo Van Velsen, that describes improvisation sessions in the long-term rehabilitation process of a troubled adult male with a record of extreme violence, including the murder of his girlfriend! In his case, music became a means of communication, a defense against those he believed were “out to get him”, and a means of relating without words.