

Wrights & Rites

To bring up children in musicking, with drumming, singing, dancing, and dramatizing as daily practices, play is the way. Lots of play time with these very general goals of performance in mind will do the trick. But in any institutionalized setting – a school, community center, church, factory day care center – some awareness that wrights and rites go together and are both part of a balanced program or curriculum is probably necessary.

If we just teach wrights – you know, as in wheelwright, cartwright, playwright, the skills of how to drum, how to dance – we can keep the attention and shape the energies of children for a while, but eventually and usually sooner rather than later, the kids want to know what this is for. Can't we do this someplace? How do we show off what we know? This is fun, wouldn't other people like to be doing this with us?

I use the word "rites" to enjoy the four way pun of *writing* about our human *right* to perform the *wrights* that lead to sacred and secular *rites*, but I could use the boring word "events," or the showbiz word "shows" or the ancient Greek word "dromenon" (for the thing we're doing this year that we did last year and will do next year too). If kids are learning how to drum and dance, they need to be part of an ensemble that fits in with seasonal festivals, assemblies, species parades, processions, farmer's markets, earth days, saint's days, celebrations of all kinds. What is happening in your locality? Any events that need drummers, dancers, costumes? Any drug free, all ages, community dances with live music? Any sounding sangas for sanity and serenity? Any demonstrations or vigils? Almost any community event worth doing is worth doing with drumming, singing, dancing, that makes the event memorable and motivates people to come to it again.

From a child's point of view, if there are no people and events to play for and with then why bother to practice or get better at doing this?

Pat Campbell:

Anything worth doing is worth doing with music in the air. School music is often geared toward seasonal concerts—winter, spring, patriotic holidays. But what if every assembly—the kickoff for the magazine sale, the monthly honors presentation, the “safety-first” plug—had a musical opener? What if school began and ended with music-making?

What if it was just the way we live, that music was part and parcel of what we do?