

PROJECT BASED LEARNING (PBL) IN THE CHORAL CLASSROOM

SUZANNE CALLAHAN



Suzanne Callahan is Choral Director at
McArthur Junior High School in Jonesboro

Is your school a Project Based Learning school? MacArthur Junior High in Jonesboro is. My first thought as I sat through yet another workshop, this one for Project Based Learning, was “isn’t choir naturally project based”? And “don’t we all live project to project, concert to concert, and event to event”?

We junior high choral directors begin the fall frantically teaching seventh graders sight-reading skills, basic notation and rhythm. We pre-test and assess trying to level the playing field for each student as they enter our programs, knowing that all feeder programs are not the same. We are all exceedingly conscious that region choir tryouts loom in the not-too-distant future and we become teaching machines trying to get it all done. It certainly sounds like a nonstop project to me!

Unfortunately my concerts, region choir events and coffee house event were not entirely what the district or the PBL instructor had in mind. The administration agreed that although our many performances were indeed projects, they hoped for a little more....

Let’s explore some of the PBL elements required.

- Collaboration (student to student, cross curricular if possible)
- Filling a need. Finding meaning. A driving question. A school, community or world issue
- Planning (we get that part don’t we)
- Audience and Presentation (yes!)
- 21st-century skills, technology

If you are searching for ideas for a project consider the following.

- Are you aware of local charities that **need** your help and that have special appeal to your students?
- Frame a concert around specific charity and coordinate your choral selections to fit. Food Bank, United Way, Cancer awareness, Hunger, Poverty,
- Are community organizations in **need** of creative minds to produce commercials or performance for a purpose?
- Are there important issues that your students believe **need** to be addressed within your school environment or issues that dovetail with other subject areas and teachers? Bullying, violence, discrimination, poverty, war
- Many of our colleagues are very skilled in creative programming. Use their expertise!
- Have you used technology in your classroom as a research tool and to enhance your performances? Have you collaborated with your EAST facilitator when technology needs arise?
- Have you invited **guest speakers** to address current issues in your district and followed up with student writing or concert theme?
- Have you involved **PARENTS** in your project presentation?
- Have you communicated with

community leaders, your faculty and administration and involved them in the project?

- Do you have an audience for your project other than parents? Have you invited members of the community to your performances?

One recent MacArthur Choir PBL

As I brainstormed trying to decide which direction to take while preparing our first concert, I stumbled upon a YouTube video of an elderly Alzheimer’s patient living in a senior facility. The gentleman in the video was not coherent. He was non verbal. His head was bowed and he was non-communicative. The video progressed with a nurse’s aide putting head phones on the man and allowing him to listen to music from his youth. Suddenly the gentleman’s demeanor completely changed. His eyes sparkled with the recognition of a familiar tune from his youth. He started to sing. For a brief moment he was changed. I was both intrigued by the use of music and emotional moved by the result. This video was part of a much larger research study by physicians studying Alzheimer’s and I immediately “borrowed” the idea for my class.

I began searching the internet for every article on Alzheimer’s I could find. I watched numerous local and national news reports and I collected as much data as I could find. While doing so I shed more than a few tears. I knew that if the project affected me this way it would surely appeal to my students and their parents as well.

As a choral director I passionately believe that:

- Music is a lifelong skill
- Music changes lives
- Music and memory go hand in hand
- Music allows us to express ourselves

- Music brings us closer to our creator
- Music accompanies the most important moments in our lives
- Music is a GIFT

The glimpse of clarity for the elderly gentleman was a gift. That music caused the brief moment of clarity was evident.

After watching the YouTube video I presented the “**Main Idea**” to my students. We had a significant conversation about elderly grand- and great-grandparents. Many students were acutely aware of the devastating effects of Alzheimer’s and were anxious to begin learning about how music could help bring clarity, if only for a few moments, in the life of even one patient. Discussions were held concerning teenagers and music and the impact music has in their lives. Together we determined how to proceed.

The following activities and procedures were implemented in our Project

- Students calculated the age of an imaginary great-grandparent (math)
- Students calculated what year the imaginary great-grandparent was 15 (more math)
- Students used their school Nooks to research the Billboard top ten for that year the imaginary grandparent turned 15 (technology)
- Using poster paper each student listed songs and composers for the years 1920-1970 and classroom walls were covered with music lists
- Our classroom enjoyed listening to practically **EVERY** song on YouTube
- Classroom discussions were abundant
- Students were amazed to find many of the songs were familiar to them via movies or television! (connection!)

- Parents were asked to donate funds to purchase ITUNES cards and IPOD shuffles (parent involvement)
- Students downloaded all the songs on the computer then uploaded to the IPODS (technology collaboration with EAST)
- A local nursing home was contacted and a presentation was made of three IPODS loaded with music from the different eras (audience)

This particular project worked very well for me and my students enjoyed the activity. They were able to make connections with their parents, their grandparents, and their great-grandparents, and to feel as if they had really accomplished something worthwhile!

I’ll be honest; I used the time **between** CPA and Spring Concert to do the project. I still live concert to concert!

IN THE SHADOW OF PALESTRINA

DR. STEPHEN CALDWELL



Dr. Stephen Caldwell
is Director of Choral Activities at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

People living in the little Italian town of Palestrina could hardly have anticipated that a small boy born in the 16th century, would immortalize their town’s name in the annals of music history. Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina transcended the role of composer. The Palestrinian style of seamless and controlled counterpoint

not only defined sacred music of the Renaissance but became a cultural signpost for the history of polyphonic development. Palestrina’s fame as a composer became legendary with the dubious reputation bestowed on his Mass for Pope Marcellus II, for which he was long credited by historians with single-handedly saving polyphonic music. His reputation has since expanded to almost mythical proportions. These myths, unfortunately, have cast dark shadows over other great composers of the time whom today are often overlooked as a source of great repertory.

Luca Marenzio (1553-1559) was known mostly for his madrigals, but he composed a respectable body of sacred music, too. Marenzio was a revered composer in Rome. After Palestrina’s death critics began to refer to him as the best musician working in Rome, a sentiment echoed by Pope Clement VIII, who commissioned Marenzio to complete the revision of the papal choir’s chant books after Palestrina’s death. The renowned lutenist John Dowland

made a journey to Rome specifically to meet and study with Marenzio. His madrigalian flare influenced his sacred compositions, giving them an energetic lift and dramatic power not found in Palestrina. An excellent example of this is Marenzio’s *Estote Fortes*. This fast, exciting piece uses all the text painting and flare of a madrigal in a motet. The text, which describes an epic battle between good and evil (represented by the serpent), is far from dogmatic and programs well for chamber choirs at all levels and abilities.

More famous now than most composers of this era, Tomás Victoria was able to establish a small body of music that has remained perpetually in the repertoire. Spanish by birth, Victoria journeyed to Italy where he met and most likely studied with Palestrina. Though Victoria’s music is excellent, it is rarely mentioned outside of the context of the Italian master whose style Victoria worked so hard to imitate. Most conductors know his *O magnum mysterium*, but his *O vos omnes* and *Pange lingua* are

equally beautiful and easier to perform as they alternate sections of homophony and polyphony.

Giovanni Maria Nanino was another figure of high regard in Rome. Italians championed his sacred compositions and his madrigals perhaps more than Palestrina's, and Nanino was, by far, the most famous teacher in the city. Nanino's music has been almost entirely forgotten, but he left us many jewels including his *Diffusa est gratia*. This hauntingly beautiful piece will showcase your sopranos with a soaring high G's, and can stun audiences with its tight dissonances and flowing harmony.

Among Nanino's many distinguished pupils was Felice Anerio. Anerio began his career at the chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore, singing under the direction of Nanino, who succeeded Palestrina. Anerio's career progressed slowly, but surely. His success was eventually rewarded when he was appointed the official composer to the papal choir upon the death of Palestrina.

Anerio's most notable work today is his setting of *Christus factus est*. Though it is largely homophonic, his counterpoint is effortless to sing and the harmonic motion leads to some very strange places including the use of a Neapolitan 6th chord almost a

hundred years before composers in Naples familiarized that harmonic device.

All of these works are in the public domain and are easily accessible to both beginning and advanced chamber choirs. They offer a diverse mixture of textural and harmonic variation and naturally fit into a variety of programming situations. Palestrina's music is wonderful, but let us not forget the many other great composers who lived in his shadow and to this day still beg for the light to shine on their faces, too.

FOR CHURCH MUSICIANS

An old farmer went to the city one weekend and attended the big city church. He came home and his wife asked him how it was. "Well," said the farmer, "it was good. They did something different, however. They sang praise songs instead of hymns."

"Praise songs?" said his wife. "What are those?"

"Oh, they're OK. They are sort of like hymns, only different," said the farmer.

"Well, what's the difference?" asked his wife.

The farmer said, "Well, it's like this - If I were to say to you:

"Martha, the cows are in the corn" - well, that would be a hymn. If on the other hand, I were to say to you:

Martha, Martha, Martha, Oh Martha, MARTHA, MARTHA,
the cows, the big cows, the brown cows, the black cows, the white cows,
the black and white cows, the COWS, COWS, COWS
are in the corn, are in the corn, are in the corn, are in the corn,
the CORN, CORN, CORN.

Then, if I were to repeat the whole thing with the guys echoing the girls, then again with the girls echoing the guys, well, that would be a praise song."

The other side of the story:

The next weekend a young, new Christian from the city went to visit a church in a nearby small town. He went home and his wife asked him how it was.

"Well," said the young man, "it was good. They did something different however. They sang hymns instead of regular songs."

"Hymns?" asked his wife. "What are those?"

"Oh, they're OK. They are sort of like regular songs, only different," said the young man.

"Well, what's the difference?" asked his wife.

The young man said, "Well, it's like this - If I were to say to you:

'Martha, the cows are in the corn' - well, that would be a regular song. If on the other hand, I were to say to you:

Oh Martha, dear Martha, hear thou my cry
Incline thine ear to the words of my mouth;
Turn thou thy whole wondrous ear by and by
To the righteous, inimitable, glorious truth.

For the way of the animals who can explain?
There in their heads is no shadow of sense,
Hearken they not in God's sun or His rain,
Unless from the mild, tempting corn they are fenced.

Yea, those cows in glad bovine, rebellious delight
Have broke free their shackles, their warm pens eschewed,
Then goaded by minions of darkness and night
They all my mild Chilliwack sweet corn have chewed.

So look to the bright shining day by and by
Where all foul corruptions of earth are reborn,
Where no vicious animals make my soul cry
And I no longer see those foul cows in the corn.

Then if I were to do only verses one, three, and four and do a key change on the last verse, well that would be a hymn."

CPDL (CHORAL PUBLIC DOMAIN LIBRARY)— A GOLD MINE FOR CHORAL DIRECTORS

JASON SICKEL

Reprinted with permission from ChorTeach,
ACDA's on-line magazine.

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Has your choral budget suffered over time? Do you have difficulty finding quality choral music for your ensembles? There is hope for you. Read on!

CPDL, Choral Public Domain Library, was founded as an online resource for musicians in December 1998. Over 18,000 scores by 2,300 different composers are available to you for free. The music may be downloaded and reproduced with no limits on the number of copies for your choirs. Composers and performers from around the world add new scores daily. You'll find music from all eras, including the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. You can access the website at www.cpdlib.org, where you will be welcomed to ChoralWiki, home of the Choral Public Domain Library. The following is an abbreviated listing of categories with contents:

Search ChoralWiki

- Exact match or keyword
- Multi-category sheet music

Browse Choral Wiki

- CPDL editors and contributors (962)
- Texts (12,398 – Macaronic, onomatopoeic, title, and language searches (60+, ancient Greek to Zulu)
- Translations (3,029)

CPDL Composers (2,446)

- Online composer catalog
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- Women composers (41)
- Composers grouped by era and nationality

Scores (18,694)

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- Scores by title
- Copyright information

Other Languages

- (60+ including Deutsch, Espanol, Italiano, Francais, Nederlands, Portugues, Tieng Viet

Seasonal Music

- Sacred music by season (Advent and Christmas through Holy Week and the Nativity of Blessed Virgin Mary)

Music by Era, Genre, Voicing, and Accompaniment

- Era (Medieval through Modern)
- Genre (Sacred—Anglican chant through spirituals and verse anthems; Secular—arias and art songs through part songs and villancicos)
- Voicing (unison and solo vocal works through sixteen or more choral parts)
- Accompaniment (unaccompanied and basso continuo through jazz band and percussion)

Sheet Music Subcategories

Accompaniment, children's songs, educational, external links, instrumental music, larger works, Lily Pond excerpts, Lily Pond requests, music catalogues, music facsimiles, music publications, musical eras, new works, polytextual music, sacred music, sacred music by season, secular music, song cycles, unfinished works, voicing, works by

language, works by multiple composers, works with withdrawn editions

Selected Mixed Ensemble Voicings Available on CPDL

LEVEL 1—Chester - William Billings; Cantate Domino - Pitoni; Easter Anthem - Billings; Fa Una Canzona - Vecchi; Gloria In Excelsis from Vivaldi Gloria; Hallelujah Amen - Handel; The Heavens Are Telling - Haydn

LEVEL 2—Achieved Is the Glorious Work - Haydn; Adoramus te - Gasparini; Adoramus te - Palestrina; Agnus Dei - Hassler (from Missa Super Dixit Maria); Cantate Domino - Anerio; Cantate Domino - Croce; Cantate Domino - Hassler; Cherubic Song #7 - Bortniansky (listed as Cherubic Hymn No. 7)

• David's Lamentation - Billings; Ecco quel fiero istante - Mozart; Enatus est Emmanuel - Praetorius (listed as En Natus Est Emmanuel); Gloria (from Heiligmesse) - Haydn; Hallelujah from Mount of Olives – Beethoven; I Have Longed for Thy Saving Health - Byrd

• I'll Say It Anyway - Certon (listed as La, La, La, Je ne l'ose dire); Innsbruck, Ich muss dich lassen - Isaac; Die Mainacht (The May Night) - Brahms; Mon coeur se recommande a vous - di Lasso; Die Nachtigall - Mendelssohn; O Domine Jesu Christe - Palestrina; Pie Jesu - Cherubini; Regina Coeli - Palestrina

• Sanctus (from Mass in C) - Mozart; Sicut locutus est (from Magnificat) - Bach; Tenebrae factae sunt - Croce; Tenebrae factae sunt - Haydn; Vere languores - Lotti

LEVEL 3—Adoramus te - attributed to Palestrina; Alma redemptoris mater - Palestrina; Au joly jeu - Jannequin; Ave verum corpus - Saint- Saens; Awake the Trumpet's Lofty Sound - Handel

• Cantique de Jean Racine - Fauré; Crucifixus - Lotti; Dixit Dominus - Mozart; Ehre sei dir Christe - Schütz; Exultate justi in domino - Viadana; He, Watching Over Israel (from Elijah) - Mendelssohn; Heilig - Mendelssohn; Hodie Christus natus est - Palestrina; How Lovely are the Messengers - Mendelssohn

• Jägdlied (Hunting Song) - Mendelssohn; I Love My Love - Holst; If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments - Tallis; Il bianco e dolce cigno - Arcadelt; Io ti vorria - Lasso; Jubilate Deo - Lasso; Justorum Animae - Lasso; Kyrie (Mass in C) - Beethoven

• Kyrie Eleison (Missa Brevis in C) - Mozart; Lebenslust (Joy of Living)

- Schubert; Lass dich nur nichts nicht dauren (Let Nothing Ever Grieve Thee) - Brahms; Let Their Celestial Concerts All Unite - Handel; Magnificat in D - Pachelbel; Neckereien - Brahms; O nata lux de lumine - Tallis

• O quam gloriosum est regnum - Victoria; O schöne Nacht - Brahms; O vos omnes - Victoria; Laudate Jehovam, omnes gentes (Psalm 117) - Telemann; Sicut cervus - Palestrina; Sing We and Chant It - Morley; Super flumina babilonis - Palestrina

• Then 'Round About the Starry Throne - Handel; The Trysting Place - Brahms (Der Gang Zum Liebchen); Tu Es Petrus - Palestrina; Tutto lo di mi dici - Lasso; Verbum caro factum est - Hassler; Zigeunerleben - Schumann

LEVEL 4—Abenständchen - Brahms; Angelus ad pastores ait - Sweelinck; Ave Maria - Bruckner; Ave Maria - Victoria; Ave maris stella - Grieg; Benedictus (Mozart Requiem) - Mozart

• The Blue Bird - Stanford; Christus factus est - Bruckner; Crucifixus - Lotti; Denn er hat seinen Engeln befohlen - Mendelssohn; Der Abend - Brahms; Dieu! Qu'il la fait bon regarder - Debussy; Ecco mormorar l'onde - Monteverdi; Exultate Deo - Scarlatti

• Haec dies - Byrd; Hodie Christus natus est - Sweelinck; How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place (Requiem) - Brahms; Lasciatemi morire - Monteverdi; Laudate pueri - Mozart; Locus iste - Bruckner; How Long Wilt Thou Be Angry? - Purcell; Maria Magdalene et altera Maria – Andrea Gabrieli

• Mass in E minor - Bruckner; O magnum mysterium - Victoria; O salutaris hostia - Rossini; Os justi meditabitur sapientiam - Bruckner; Plorate filii Israel (from Jephthe) - Carissimi; Requiem - Faure; Salvator mundi - Tallis; Selig sind die Toten - Schütz; Sing Joyfully - Byrd

• Songs of Nature - Dvořák; Three Motets (Justorum animae, Coelos ascendit hodie, Beati quorum via) - Stanford; Venite, Exultemus Domino - Sweelinck; Werfet panier auf im Lande - Telemann; When David Heard - Weelkes; Warum is das Licht (Why Then Has the Light) - Brahms

Favorites—Familiar and Not So Familiar

Here are thirteen of my favorite Choral Public Domain Library discoveries—canons, rounds, SATB, SA, TB, TBB. See if any of this music will work with your

choirs. I've included suggested recordings in several cases.

• Sancta Maria, libera nos - Canon a 4 - Francesco della Porta (1600-1667)

• Early to Bed (American Round) - text from Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanac.

• Jubilate Deo - SATB - Orlando di Lasso (1532 - 1594). Recording by ADOREMUS Slovak Choir.

• Greensleeves & Round on a Well-known Text - David Ellyard. A terrific cross-curricular connection. Show this to your colleagues in math and then to your principal.

• Puer natus in Bethlehem - SA - Josef Rheinberger (1839- 1901). Recording by the Jugend Cathedral Chor of Fulda, Germany

• Ave maris stella - Edvard Grieg (1843-1907). Recording by St. Johns College Choir (boy sopranos and altos)

• La Tricotea - S, A and/or T, B – Anonymous. Recording by The King's Singers

• Kyrie in F (KV 33) - SATB - Mozart (1756-1791). Research indicates that the composition year of 1766 seems to be accurate. Mozart wrote this jewel when he was ten! Not too complex. Conservative ranges. This would make a great "intro to Mozart" work. Recording by the Arnold Schoenberg Choir

• You Stole My Love - Walter Cecil Macfarren (1826-1905) - SATB voicing. I'm certain you are familiar with the SSA version. Recording is by the OPUS Chamber Choir, University of Southern Utah

• Der Gang zum Liebchen (The Trysting Place) - SATB - Brahms (1832-1896) - Another beautiful secular piece by Brahms. Recording by the University of Utah Chamber Singers. Level 3 on the KSHSAA Required List

• Tutto lo di mi dici - SATB - Orlando di Lasso (1532-1594) a straight-forward Italian madrigal. Fun to sing for all parts.

• Notte O Cielo O Mar - SATB - Maddalena Casulana (c. 1544 - c. 1590). Possibly the first female to have her music printed and published

• Cantate Domino - TBB - Michel Richard de la Lande (1657- 1726). French Baroque composer & organist; served in the court of King Louis XIV

I encourage you to explore and enjoy CPDL!

The Twelve Politically Correct Days of Christmas

On the 12th day of the Eurocentrically imposed midwinter festival, my Significant Other in a consenting adult, monogamous relationship gave to me:

TWELVE males reclaiming their inner warrior through ritual drumming,

ELEVEN pipers piping (plus the 18-member pit orchestra made up of members in good standing of the Musicians Equity Union as called for in their union contract even though they will not be asked to play a note),

TEN melanin deprived testosterone-poisoned scions of the patriarchal ruling class system leaping,

NINE persons engaged in rhythmic self-expression,

EIGHT economically disadvantaged female persons stealing milk-products from enslaved Bovine-Americans,

SEVEN endangered swans swimming on federally protected wetlands,

SIX enslaved fowl-Americans producing stolen non-human animal products,

FIVE golden symbols of culturally sanctioned enforced domestic incarceration, (NOTE: after members of the Animal Liberation front threatened to throw red paint at my computer, the calling birds, french hens and partridge have been reintroduced to their native habitat. To avoid further Animal-American enslavement, the remaining gift package has been revised.)

FOUR hours of recorded whale songs,

THREE deconstructionist poets,

TWO Sierra Club calendars printed on recycled processed tree carcasses and...

ONE Spotted Owl activist chained to an old-growth pear tree. Merry Christmas happy Chanukah. Good Kwanzaa. Blessed Yule. Happy holidays!!!! (unless otherwise prohibited by law) *

*Unless, of course, you are suffering from Seasonally Affected Disorder (SAD). If this be the case, please substitute this gratuitous call for celebration with suggestion that you have a thoroughly adequate day.

ARACDA SCHOLARSHIP FOR GRADUATE CHORAL STUDIES

Application form

ArACDA is awarding a \$500 scholarship for graduate study in choral music. Applicants must be members of ArACDA (with at least 12 months of past membership), be employed as a choral teacher in an Arkansas church or school, have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 system, and be enrolled in an Arkansas college or university pursuing a degree in music.

Full name _____

Home address _____

email _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

School in which you are enrolled or enrolling _____

Degree you are seeking _____

Please enclosed the following items with this application form:

1. A letter of application (typed or printed) describing your qualifications and personal goals;
2. Two sealed letters of recommendation, one from an administrator and one from an active ArACDA member;
3. A copy of your current transcript;
4. A summary of your professional experience.

Please submit to
Mark Langley
Lakeside High School
2871 Malvern Ave
Hot Springs, AR 71901

The ArACDA board will make the decision as to which applicant will receive the scholarship.

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Arkansas **accent** is the newsletter of the Arkansas chapter of ACDA

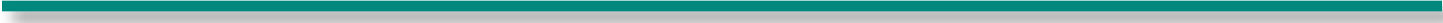
In this issue:

Finding free usable music at CPDL

Humor

Project Based Learning Ideas

Renaissance Choral Music



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