



Creating original opera in a rural school : integration and relevance in discovery learning music education

by Susan Claire Hove-Pabst

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Montana State University

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Abstract:

This study documented the process which occurred during the creation and production of original student opera by elementary students in a one-room rural school. Interaction between the students and the opera form was observed and described in order to further understanding of the potential of original student opera as a learning and teaching tool within a child-centered, discovery learning setting.

The method for the study was a qualitative case study.

The researcher acted as a participant-observer. As a participant, she guided the students through lessons and activities and acted as a resource as they participated in all phases of creation and production of their original opera. As an observer, she assembled descriptive field notes, recorded documentation, written documentation, interviews, and questionnaires. During and after the gathering of data, she analyzed them for prevalent themes.

Two components of the project became evident and subsequently underwent detailed study: integration of subject areas and relevance to children's lives. It was found that there was integration of subject areas typically found in an elementary curriculum, with prevalence in the areas of music, visual arts, drama, movement, and language. This integration was initiated by the opera form, by the project design, by the personnel involved (students, teachers, and the community), and by the rural way of life. Evidence of relevance to the children's lives was found. This relevance was introduced primarily by the students, reflecting their rural life style in elements of their stories as well as their working conversation.

The researcher concluded that original student opera can be used as an effective tool for learning about self, others, and the world and subsequently for communicating what one knows through an integrated, relevant form. The students expanded their repertoire of learning tools while enriching their lives.

CREATING ORIGINAL OPERA IN A RURAL SCHOOL:
INTEGRATION AND RELEVANCE IN DISCOVERY
LEARNING MUSIC EDUCATION

by

Susan Claire Hove-Pabst



A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
1.	INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....1
	Introduction.....1
	Background of the Problem.....1
	Arts in Education.....2
	Relevance and Integration in Education..4
	Opera in the Curriculum.....5
	Statement of Problem.....8
	Importance of Study.....9
	Definition of Terms.....13
	Questions to be Examined.....14
	The Researcher and Opera.....15
	Review of Relevant Theory and Previous
	Studies.....18
	Introduction.....18
	Relevant Educational Theory.....18
	Child-centered Discovery Learning.....18
	Integration in Education.....24
	Relevance to Children's Lives.....29
	Studies on Opera in Education.....32
	The Opera Form.....32
	Opera in Child-centered Discovery
	Learning.....34
	Integration in Previous Opera
	Studies.....41
	Relevance in Previous Opera
	Studies.....44
2.	METHODOLOGY.....50
	Population Description and
	Sampling Procedure.....50
	Qualitative Case Study.....53
	Choice of the Qualitative Case
	Study.....53
	Contributions from Other Disciplines.....56
	The Role as Researcher.....58
	Explanation of Project Procedure.....59
	Methods of Data Collection.....62
	Data Analysis and the Written Research.....65
	Limitations and Delimitation.....68

TABLE OF CONTENTS--Continued

	Page
3. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT	72
Preparatory Phase.....	73
Singing Skills.....	74
Story Phase.....	75
Opera Creation.....	81
Rehearsal Phase.....	91
Performance and Post-performance Phase.....	96
4. PRESENTATION OF PROJECT DATA.....	99
Evidence of Integration.....	100
Circle Story Form.....	100
Investigating the Circle Story.....	100
Creating a Class Circle Story.....	102
Creating Circle Stories in Small Groups.....	104
Creating the Circle Story Opera Text.....	108
Written Communications.....	110
Letter Writing.....	110
Newsletters.....	112
Programs and Posters.....	113
Opera Notebooks.....	114
Opera Readiness Activities.....	115
General Discussions.....	115
Folk Story Improvisation.....	118
Songs of the Opera: Composing and Learning.....	120
Rehearsals and Performance.....	124
Music Activities.....	127
Post Opera Experiences.....	129
Interviews and Questionnaires.....	130
Student Interviews.....	130
Audience Questionnaire.....	132
Classroom Teacher Interview.....	132
Relevance to the Children's Lives.....	134
Elements of the Products.....	134
Working Discussion Evidence.....	136
Student Recognition of Relevance.....	138
Teacher Recognition of Relevance.....	140
Community Recognition of Relevance.....	141

TABLE OF CONTENTS--Continued

	Page
Summary of Data.....	142
Integration.....	142
Music.....	142
Visual Arts.....	142
Language Arts.....	142
Drama.....	143
Movement.....	143
Social Studies.....	143
Science.....	144
Math.....	144
Computer.....	144
Sources of Integration.....	144
Relevance.....	145
5. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	147
Findings.....	147
Conclusions and Recommendations for Practice.....	148
Recommendations for Further Research.....	151
Personal Commentary.....	153
REFERENCES CITED.....	156
APPENDICES:	
A. Opera Libretto and Notation.....	167
B. Letter to Parents.....	176
Student Interviews.....	177
Teacher Interview.....	179
Audience Survey.....	180
Benefits Comments Sheet.....	182
Permission Form.....	184
C. Sample Notebook Entries.....	185

ABSTRACT

This study documented the process which occurred during the creation and production of original student opera by elementary students in a one-room rural school. Interaction between the students and the opera form was observed and described in order to further understanding of the potential of original student opera as a learning and teaching tool within a child-centered, discovery learning setting.

The method for the study was a qualitative case study. The researcher acted as a participant-observer. As a participant, she guided the students through lessons and activities and acted as a resource as they participated in all phases of creation and production of their original opera. As an observer, she assembled descriptive field notes, recorded documentation, written documentation, interviews, and questionnaires. During and after the gathering of data, she analyzed them for prevalent themes.

Two components of the project became evident and subsequently underwent detailed study: integration of subject areas and relevance to children's lives. It was found that there was integration of subject areas typically found in an elementary curriculum, with prevalence in the areas of music, visual arts, drama, movement, and language. This integration was initiated by the opera form, by the project design, by the personnel involved (students, teachers, and the community), and by the rural way of life. Evidence of relevance to the children's lives was found. This relevance was introduced primarily by the students, reflecting their rural life style in elements of their stories as well as their working conversation.

The researcher concluded that original student opera can be used as an effective tool for learning about self, others, and the world and subsequently for communicating what one knows through an integrated, relevant form. The students expanded their repertoire of learning tools while enriching their lives.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

School children, busily working together on arias, libretto, staging, and other aspects of opera creation and production, may not be what most people envision as part of a typical school curriculum in the remote ranch country of Wyoming. I observed these activities, however, during a study of the interaction between elementary school children and the opera form. The study describes the process of creation and production in detail, while assessing the effectiveness of original student opera as part of an arts education curriculum in terms of integration of subject matter and relevance to the lives of the students.

Background of the Problem

This study is set against a backdrop of various educational concerns. Certainly there is a concern about the role of the arts in education (Broudy, 1979; Eisner, 1987; Fowler, 1988, 1990; Kiester, 1985; Lee, 1985; Moody, 1990; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988). Addressing this concern, grants from the United States Department of Education, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the

National Endowment for the Humanities funded a recent drafting of guidelines describing what every child, kindergarten through grade twelve, should know and do in music, dance, theatre, and the visual arts (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994).

Arts in education is just one facet of total education. Educators and children's advocates are continually seeking appropriate and effective ways of educating throughout the curriculum. Two elements often cited as desirable components of child-centered, discovery learning education programs are (a) relevance to the children's lives and (b) integration of subject areas.

This research examines the study of opera by children and its effectiveness as a tool for learning, particularly in terms of relevance and integration. It has an admittedly narrow focus, but it has clear implications for arts education and education in general.

Arts in Education. Arts educators and advocates emphasize the importance of arts in the curriculum, claiming many and varied benefits. Development of aesthetic awareness, sensibilities, and perceptions is a primary benefit of arts participation (Broudy, 1979; Eisner, 1987, 1991; Fowler, 1988, 1990; Kiester, 1982, 1985; Myers, 1990). Understanding of self, one's culture, and the cultures of others is developed by the arts with the additional benefit of open mindedness and tolerance for differences (Eisner, 1987, 1991; Fowler, 1990;

Kiester, 1982, 1985). Arts literacy gives tools for decoding wisdom and knowledge as well as for expressing thoughts and feelings (Broudy, 1979; Eisner, 1987, 1991; Fowler, 1990; Kiester, 1985). Development of the intellect, including critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity, is nurtured through the arts (Eisner, 1991; Kiester, 1982, 1985; Lee, 1985; Myers, 1990) along with development of feelings and intuition (Fowler, 1990; Myers, 1990). The arts validate and encourage strengths and interests of individuals (Eisner, 1991; Fowler, 1990; Kiester, 1982, 1985; Lee, 1985), while providing our society with citizens of the future who have the imagination to face the challenges and find solutions to key questions (Eisner, 1987; Kiester, 1985; Piaget, 1970).

For the next century we need a new kind of human being. The huge acceleration in the rate of growth of facts, of knowledge, and of advances in technology requires a change in people and their relationships to the world. We need people who are comfortable with change, who are able to improvise, who can face new situations with confidence and creativity. (Kiester, 1985, p. 24)

The arts deserve a place in the curriculum on their own merit, because of their own intrinsic worth (Kiester, 1985; Lee, 1985). Beyond that, however, "the arts can act as a bridge to all the subjects in the curriculum, illuminating and energizing the entire curriculum" (Kiester, 1985, p. 27). They become a powerful force in the integration of subject areas and in connecting school with life.

Relevance and Integration in Education. Some educators have placed a high value on relevance of the learning experience to the child's life (Dewey, 1959a, 1902; Goodman, 1986; Rousseau, 1762/1956). They have asserted that education should reflect life and not be isolated from it (Dewey, 1900). They have decried educational practices in which facts were "torn away from their original place in experience" (Dewey, 1902, p.6).

One way in which relevance is kept in learning experiences is by means of the integration of subject areas. Dewey suggests that life has a science aspect, an arts and culture aspect, and a communication aspect, but that they are parts of a whole experience, "Relate school to life, and all studies are of necessity related" (Dewey, 1900, p. 91). The National Association for the Education of Young Children also recommends an integrated approach which provides for all areas of a child's development: physical, emotional, social, and cognitive. "Children's learning does not occur in narrowly defined subject areas; their development and learning are integrated" (Bredekamp, 1987, p.3).

Relationships between and among subject areas are not automatically identified and applied by students when learning is presented in separate, isolated subject areas. This interrelatedness can be taught, however, through a curriculum of whole, integrated, relevant experiences (Anderson &

Lawrence, 1982; Bredekamp, 1987; Burnaford, 1993; Paxcia-Bibbins, 1993; Werner, 1990).

Support for integration of subject areas exists in arts education, both as integration among arts disciplines and as integration between the arts and other subject areas (Anderson & Lawrence, 1982, 1991; Kiester, 1982, 1985; Lee, 1985; Myers, 1990; Paxcia-Bibbins, 1993, Werner, 1990). Swanwick (1988) cites Carl Orff and Gertrude Keetman, prominent music educators, as recommending especially that music be reunited with movement, dance, and speech. Upitis (1990) recommends combining music, drama, and visual arts, as modeled after the whole language approach.

Many music educators recognize the need for both integrated and specialized aspects to the arts programs (Anderson & Lawrence, 1982, 1991; Burnaford, 1993; Lee, 1985; Myers, 1990). They express a confidence that "music can maintain its integrity as a worthwhile discipline in its own right and still be part of a holistic experience for the child" (Paxcia-Bibbins, 1993, p. 23).

Opera in the Curriculum. The study of opera is a common component of music curricula, as presented in curriculum guides (Alello, Cade, Hegg, & Hatfield, 1986; Harris, Hunter, Micheletti, Slanina, & Mutch, 1984; Svengalis et al., 1985). The upper elementary grades are the usual recipients of this study, which often includes other forms of musical drama along with opera. Opera is listed in the "form" component and

carries objectives such as "demonstrate awareness of the diverse forms and genres of music, e.g., opera, folk, symphonies, jazz, non-western" (Alello et al., 1986, p. 142).

Music series textbooks also include the study of opera and related musical drama (Culp, Eisman, & Hoffman, 1988; Marsh, Rinehart, & Savage, 1980; Meske, Andress, Pautz, & Willman, 1988). Although there are variations to this format, the suggested lessons usually include discussion of characteristics and terminology, reading a brief form of the story, and following an abbreviated text while listening to recorded excerpts. Students, in a passive role, discuss, respond, and do paper/pencil tasks such as a fill-in-the-blank test (Meske et al., 1988). Active student participation, such as to act out scenes (Culp et al., 1988) or to "participate as performer, director or choreographer in a 'mini-musical' or operetta using instruments, voices and dance" (Svengalis et al., 1985, p. M32), is not frequently suggested.

The decades of the 1980s and 1990s have brought new interest to projects involving children and opera (Music Educators National Conference, 1993). Some projects have continued to place the children in passive, receptive roles, while others have involved them actively in child-centered activities.

The Metropolitan Opera Guild and Opera America are two forerunners in child-centered projects (Fowler, 1981, 1985, 1989; Furber, 1986; Harland, 1990; Lipton, 1982; Winer, 1990).

In the Metropolitan Opera Guild model, teams consisting of a classroom teacher and a music teacher travel to New York City to participate in workshops on guiding students to create and produce opera. These teams return to their school districts to implement the program into their curricula.

One emphasis of this program is to place the students in all roles--as actors and actresses, dancers, musicians, composers, writers, technicians, producers, publicists, researchers, costumers, and visual artists. Another emphasis is to encourage the resultant original student operas to parallel the students' lives, providing relevance. This quest for relevance is echoed by other music educators as well. "Perhaps one of the most prominent and positive changes we have witnessed in schools over the past two decades is the increasingly common view that education should be child-centered, that it should be relevant to the child's life and experiences" (Upitis, 1990, p. 8).

One explanation for the recent interest in educational use of opera lies in its inherent integration of subject matter. According to the Harvard Dictionary of Music (Apel, 1966) opera is "a drama, either tragic or comic, sung throughout, with appropriate scenery and acting, to the accompaniment of an orchestra" (p. 505). While outlining suggested approaches to integration, Anderson and Lawrence (1982) suggest using art forms that are in themselves combinations of different arts. "Opera, for example, combines

drama, costuming, scenery, dance (on occasion), and music" (p. 35). John Dewey recognizes the potential for integration through combined art forms.

The possibilities for plays, festivals, and pageants arranged on this plan are endless; for it is always possible to find subject-matter which will give the children just as much training in reading, spelling, history, literature or even some phases of geography, as would dry Grad-grind facts of a routine test-book type. (Dewey & Dewey, 1915, p. 131)

The opera form thus offers possibilities for relevant, child-centered, discovery learning, at least in part because of its integrative characteristics.

Statement of Problem

The problem of this study was to document the process which occurred during the creation and production of original student opera by elementary students in a one-room rural school. I observed and recorded interaction between the students and the opera form which occurred during participation in a child-centered, discovery learning project. The resultant data was analyzed in order to further understanding of the role of the creation of original student opera as a learning and teaching tool. Two themes of interest emerged and subsequently were examined in detail. One theme was integration of subject areas, with attention to the prevalence of integration, the subject areas involved, and the source of the integration. The second theme under investigation was relevance to the students' lives. The

examination of these two topics, integration and relevance, and the insight and understanding which the original student opera project brought to these topics, became the focus of my research problem.

Importance of Study

This qualitative case study was designed to contribute to the knowledge base and to inform teaching practice in music education. It is hoped that observation and analysis of this experience will add to the understanding of children's learning in child-centered, discovery method integrated arts education.

Several schools of thought in music education have supported child-centered, discovery learning music curricula. Swanwick (1988) describes "three central pillars of music education: a concern for musical traditions; sensitivity to students; awareness of social context and community" (p. 10). The second pillar reflects music education which focuses on the child as enjoyer, explorer, and discoverer. This is referred to as child-centered, discovery learning methodology.

This fundamental theoretical shift requires us to see children as musical inventors, improvisers, composers; either in order to encourage something called 'self-expression,' or, more credibly, as a direct way of coming to understand how music actually works through activities calling for decision-making, handling sound as an expressive medium. (Swanwick, 1988, p. 14)

The Orff Schulwerk approach has advocated learning through discovery, learning by doing (Swanwick, 1988; Wampler,

1968; Warner, 1991). As part of this learning, Orff Schulwerk has suggested integrating the performing arts--music and movement specifically, but also speech and drama (Shamrock, 1986; Swanwick, 1988).

The Richards Institute, founded by Mary Helen Richards, has supported the position that "learning is the dual responsibility of teacher and student" (Bennett, 1987, p. 41). At the center, however, is the child.

In the beginning there is the child--
 He must discover his own way.
 You lead, opening the song for his wonder--
 a wonder that grows as it is shared with the others.
 The child sings, sees, hears and feels the song
 through movement--
 Then he sings, sees, hears and feels the song
 in his inner knowing,
 and creating symbols and new sounds,
 bright in color and with expressive line,
 builds his own understanding. (Richards, 1977, p.1)

Other music educators have focused on student compositions (Regelski, 1981; Schafer, 1976; Thomas, 1970; Upitis, 1990, 1992). In his description of the Manhattanville Music Curriculum project, Ronald Thomas writes that the student "must become involved in the total process, composing, performing, conducting, listening with sensitive awareness, and evaluating" (1970, p. 4). The students' products (compositions, performances, critiques) and processes are evaluated according to appropriate standards, much as for children's paintings or children's speech and written communication. The students are encouraged to consider themselves composers and musicians (Upitis, 1990).

In this curriculum the student is a musician from the moment of the first strategy. While his level of musical thought will certainly not be comparable to that of the experienced musician, the way in which he functions is parallel. (Thomas, 1970, p.5)

In spite of numerous occurrences of child-centered, discovery learning in music education, there is a shortage of research on this type of music education. According to the Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning, a project of the Music Educators National Conference, "a philosophical basis has been established for discovery learning as a methodology. All that remains is a foundation of research to verify its effectiveness" (Costanza & Russell, 1992, p. 504). If, as suggested by Uptis (1990), we model research after that which the whole language movement has provided, we will use naturalistic studies which "describe the classroom experience, report the curricular decisions made, and examine the learning that occurs" (Weaver, 1990, p. 128). It is this need for research on holistic, child-centered, discovery learning music education that prompted my research on original children's opera; this was the primary incentive for the research.

A more specific incentive for the research was examination of two features of child-centered, discovery learning: relevance and integration of subject areas. Many educators have recommended integration of subject areas and the integrative nature of opera has made it a natural choice for combining the arts with each other and with other subject

areas (Anderson & Lawrence, 1985). Opera's penchant for telling a story has made it a potential tool for relevance (Fowler, 1989; Smith, 1993). But both integration and relevance have to be meaningful, natural components of a learning experience. They cannot be contrived and artificial (Werner, 1990). If an opera is constructed by students, using student-generated stories, music, staging, and production, then, as an authentic arts event, it is a strategy worth investigating for evidence of integration and relevance.

While reviewing the literature on children's opera experiences, I found several descriptions of projects. There was, however, an absence of detailed, in-depth description and analysis of data. This study has attempted to provide rich description as well as analysis and interpretation of data. "It is necessary to have rich descriptions of classrooms where teachers are using research-based knowledge of children's thinking to improve (mathematical) learning" (Fennema, Franke, Carpenter, & Carey, 1993, p. 555).

By adding to theory and practice in original student opera, it is hoped that this study has added to the larger area of holistic, relevant, integrative, child-centered, discovery learning in music education. This in turn becomes part of theory and practice in learning about, in, and through the arts (Fowler, 1988) and in education in general.

As often happens, there are other issues which emerge from or coincide with the main objective. In this study the

place of opera in our culture indirectly comes under examination. It is beyond the scope or power of this study to rescue the art form of opera from what appears to be its declining status in contemporary culture. However, it may provide insight into the potential of this conglomerate of music, drama, story, and visual art, especially in terms of making it more populist (Fowler, 1989; Furber, 1986; Kupferberg, 1975).

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this research project, the following definitions will be employed:

1. Circle story form: A traditional story structure in which the main character begins in a home setting, progresses through a series of events, and ends up back in the home setting.
2. Opera: A staged musical drama, complete with scenery and costumes, in which the actors and actresses sing the words.
3. Original student opera: An opera--complete with drama, music, movement, scenery, sets, costumes, staging, and publicity--which is created, produced, and performed by the students.
4. Libretto: The words of the opera, the text.
5. Integration: The combining of disciplines, subject areas, within the learning experience.

6. Improvise: The impromptu "making up" of music, words, or drama.

7. Lyrics: The words to a song.

8. Discovery learning: Learning in which the student constructs knowledge through interactions with people, ideas, and materials, gained through concrete, hands-on, child-centered activities and experiences.

9. Child-centered education: Education in which the child is the active agent, the explorer, the discoverer in his or her learning. Emphasis is placed on developmentally and individually appropriate instruction.

10. Masterwork: A composition which is an accepted part of a body of traditional music literature.

11. Pentatonic scale: A five-tone scale constructed with no half step intervals between consecutive tones, as exemplified by the tones Do Re Mi Sol La, which is ideal for children's composition because it is nearly fail-proof.

12. Rural school: A school located in the country, often containing just one class. Children of varying ages form a class, taught by one teacher.

Questions to be Examined

The study was intended to examine the overarching question: what happened when this group of children created and produced an original student opera? More specific questions emerged from the study:

1. Did integration of subject areas occur?

2. Which subject areas were integrated?
3. What were the sources of integration: the form of opera itself, the project design, the classroom teacher or music teacher, or the children and their lives?
4. Did the process and product of the creation and production of original student opera reflect relevance to the children's lives?

The Researcher and Opera

During 16 years of teaching as a music specialist in public elementary schools, I continually confronted the task of deciding what to teach and how to teach it, or perhaps better stated, the task of deciding what I wanted my students to gain and how I could facilitate that learning. My search for pedagogy and curriculum was not limited to the field of music. I believed in teaching the whole child and in the interrelatedness of all subject areas. Consequently I accessed other disciplines and specialty areas through classes, literature, workshops, and conferences. I was particularly interested in the areas of whole language teaching and early childhood education, which modeled developmentally and individually appropriate practices. Now, as a teacher of music majors and elementary education majors, I still focus on the issues and challenges of pedagogy and curriculum.

One area of content in the music curricula which I have examined over the years is children's study of opera. My

personal experience with opera has served as one of many sources for this study.

I grew up in a setting similar to that of my students. Although my home was very musical, opera was, as Swanwick said, "strongly identified with another culture" (1988, p. 98), and not part of my life. Until I personally experienced opera in a real, hands-on setting, as an undergraduate music student taking part in a university performance, I did not value it and considered it unimportant to my life.

When I began my teaching career opera was present in the curriculum guides and in the music texts, although I could see little evidence that it was present in the lives of most of my students. They were generally ignorant of and unenthusiastic about opera. The suggested lessons from texts and curriculum guides reflected the educational philosophy that students were passive receivers of a traditional "repertoire of 'masterworks' or the work of master-musicians" (Swanwick, 1988, p. 11).

I began to experiment with learning situations which placed my students in the center of opera and in active roles. In 1973, I worked cooperatively with a classroom teacher, assisting fifth grade students in their production of an opera. They chose a story from their reading book and created lyrics and music. They also designed and constructed sets, costumes, staging, and publicity. The project culminated in a public performance. As teachers we were especially

interested in our students' growth in the academic areas of music, visual arts, movement, language arts, math, and social studies as well as in self-esteem and social skills. There were subsequent small-scale productions, including puppet opera and informal, impromptu classroom opera.

Two occurrences rejuvenated my interest in children's opera several years later. One was the work I did with a group of elementary students and their classroom teacher in a one-room, rural school in McLeod, Montana, during the 1991-1992 school year. I designed and directed several sets of activities intended to integrate the arts and other subject areas. The final project was an original student opera which they created, produced, and performed.

The other stimulus for my renewed interest was the Metropolitan Opera Guild's student opera program. I learned about this program from two South Dakota teachers and their enthusiastic middle school students. This approach has been described in several journals (Fowler, 1981, 1985, 1989; Harland, 1990; Lipton, 1982; Winer, 1990).

During my earlier experiences with children's opera, I had done a minimal amount of documentation. Seeing great promise in original student opera as a learning/teaching tool, I wanted to continue work in this area and to gain insight and understanding about the processes, interactions, and products involved. With encouragement from my doctoral committee at Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana in May, 1992, I

embarked once more on a search. This time I decided to use the method of qualitative case study research to enable me to formalize my description and analysis.

Review of Relevant Theory and Previous Studies

Introduction

The body of knowledge existing relative to children's original opera is categorized in the following manner for this review: (a) information on educational theory which influenced the design of the opera project and (b) information on projects involving opera and children.

Relevant Educational Theory

Information on educational theory relevant to the project came from the field of general education, with additional input from specific areas such as whole language education and music education. The information focuses on child-centered, discovery learning methodology, integration of subject areas, and relevance to children's lives.

Child-centered Discovery Learning. Discovery learning methodologies place children at the center of their own learning. Learners are actively involved in discovery. Learning under this view is a kind of personal research. Personal experience, not verbalization or lecture, forms the basis for their learning (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987; Dewey, 1900; Dewey, 1959a; Kamii, 1973; Piaget, 1970; Rousseau,

1762/1956). The child at the center is a "whole child", a totality of intellect, morality, and affective attributes (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987).

Children transform their learning experiences into knowledge, skills, and attitude as they act upon them (Piaget, 1970). The teacher may set into place the challenge, but the children self-initiate and self-conduct their learning. The students work out problems for themselves (Dewey, 1900, 1959a). Children construct knowledge as they learn through play and through interaction with materials, people, and ideas. In some stages this may involve more than just concrete manipulation. It may include reflective, abstract manipulation and verbal manipulation. But these manipulations must also be spontaneous from the child, not imposed onto him or her (Piaget, 1970).

"Nature wants children to be children before they are men" (Rousseau, 1762/1956, p. 38). "Childhood has ways of seeing, thinking and feeling peculiar to itself; nothing can be more foolish than to seek to substitute our ways for them" (Rousseau, 1762/1956, p. 38-39). Children's thought is qualitatively different than that of adults (Piaget, 1970). Their mental development is influenced by maturity, experience, social interaction, and equilibrium (Charles, 1974). In choosing materials and activities, therefore, educators need to study children in order to identify their capacities and recognize the stages of their growth (Dewey,

1900, 1959a; Dewey & Dewey, 1915). Teaching practices need to be developmentally and individually appropriate (Bredekamp, 1987).

In line with appropriate practices, our expectations of children's work need to reflect an appreciation for their stage of development. We need to "accept the reality of learning through risk-taking and error" (Goodman, 1986, p. 19) and to use "behaviors as indications of developing knowledge and underlying competence" (Goodman, Goodman, & Hood, 1989, p. xiii). Research in whole language has "shown that although the products may be unconventional by adult standards, even two-year-olds have well-developed strategies for exploring written language through reading and writing" (Newman, 1985, p.20). Although traditional approaches have "assumed that readers must possess tacit knowledge of literary conventions and forms before they can uncover the inherent or so-called true meaning of a literary work" (McClure, 1990, p. 9), "the value of invented spelling has become widely recognized by psycholinguists in recent years" (Kamii & Randazzo, 1989, p. 104).

To the educator worried that children are bad sources of information, we say that they are bad sources if we assume that learning takes place through the transmission and internalization of information. Since children construct their knowledge, they learn not from each other but with each other by going from one level after another of being "wrong." (Kamii & Randazzo, 1989, p. 113)

As teachers place children in the center of their learning and accept their product and process as valid, they

need to investigate the environment in which the children learn. Such an environment encourages not only interaction between a child and materials and ideas, but also social interaction among the children, and between child and teacher (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987; Goodman, 1986; Goodman et al., 1989; Kamii & Randazzo, 1989; Manning, Manning, & Long, 1989; McClure, 1990). "It is through interaction with both peers and teachers, negotiating meanings through language, that children develop the abilities to reflect upon their unique personal constructs or responses" (McClure, 1990, p. 10). This interaction often occurs through activities that require children to work cooperatively in groups (Charles, 1974; Dewey, 1900, 1959a; McClure, 1990; Piaget, 1970).

In this kind of setting the role of the teachers shifts to that of guides (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987; Dewey, 1900; Kamii, 1973; Rousseau, 1762/1956). Teachers are certainly in control of the setting, the materials, and the activities; they are the adults in charge. Yet they become fellow-learners. This kind of teacher,

as the member of the group having the riper and fuller experience and the greater insight into the possibilities of continuous development found in any suggested project, has not only the right but the duty to suggest lines of activity, and to show that there need not be any fear of adult imposition provided the teacher knows children as well as subjects, their import is not exhausted in bringing out this fact. (Dewey, 1959b, p. 124)

This kind of teacher facilitates the student's construction of knowledge (Kamii, 1973). Carefully chosen questions,

suggestions, and criticism can aid the children's own investigation and bring them to consciousness of what they have done (Dewey, 1900). The teacher can take hold of children's activities and help give them direction, in this way extending their ideas (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987; Dewey, 1900). Teachers must find projects with content that intrigues children and arouses in them a need and desire to figure something out (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987).

Although the social setting is very important, the physical setting can also be conducive to discovery learning. A workshop area, with both a large work space and smaller adjacent areas for individual or small-group work, provides room to work; it should not be a room set up for listening and lecture (Dewey, 1900). "Silence and immobility shall cease to be held as the great scholastic virtues" (Piaget, 1970, p. 102). Set in confusion, bustle, and certain disorders of a workshop, there will be a climate of informality "because experience has proved that formalization is hostile to genuine mental activity and to sincere emotional expression and growth" (Dewey, 1959b, p. 115).

When these general education principles are applied to specific disciplines they retain their validity. Donald Graves, in commenting about process writing, said, "The writing process is discovered by doing it...Students can be lectured on the components of the process, but they still only know process by actually doing the writing, making words

fulfill their intentions" (1983, p. 250). Similarly, students learn to read by reading (Smith, 1976).

In child-centered music education programs, the curriculum focuses on the child as the active participant (Elliott, 1990; Swanwick, 1988; Upitis, 1990, 1992; Wiggins, 1990).

This fundamental theoretical shift requires us to see children as music inventors, improvisers, composers; either in order to encourage something called "self-expression" or, more credibly, as a direct way of coming to understand how music actually works through activities calling for decision-making, handling sound as an expressive medium. (Swanwick, 1988, p. 14)

Those children learn to construct their own meaning from music, while giving credibility to their own musical creations and performances as well as those of others (Upitis, 1990, 1992, Wiggins, 1990).

In music education, as in other areas of education, it is important to value the children's processes and products during music creation (Upitis, 1990, 1992). This valuing is sometimes hindered when "we make judgments of their compositions based on adult standards" (Upitis, 1990, p.3).

This problem is rooted more deeply when

current concepts of "development" as progress towards perfection lead us to see both children and earlier notation systems as deficient. Yet our seeing them as deficient may reflect rather our failure to understand them in their own terms. (Upitis, 1992, p. ix)

Upitis (1992) recommends that we honor children as learners, encourage them to take risks and accept errors, and recognize

and accept children's original works. "Surely part of the secret of becoming a musician or a composer (or whatever) is that one is encouraged to think that one already is those things" (p. 3). Through the tools that enable children to be actively involved in discovery

lies something bigger than whole music or whole language. It is more like whole mind: the human mind at work through symbol systems, which represent and also shape our perceptions, our worlds, both outer and inner. Giving access to the many languages of the human mind is the work of education. (Upitis, 1992, p. ix)

Not all music educators subscribe to the philosophy of child-centered education. Some focus instead on the traditional body of music or the content. "A music curriculum based on children experiencing only their own musical products would starve and impoverish musical insight and development" (Swanwick, 1988, p. 15). Child-centered music teachers relate the children's knowledge and skills to music of their own creation and to the traditional body of music (Upitis, 1990; Wiggins, 1990).

Integration in Education. Much of the curriculum presented in traditional schools is divided into individual pieces; facts are "torn away from their original place in experience" (Dewey, 1902, p.6). "In a so-called 'egg carton' curriculum, the subjects of math, language arts, science, social studies, art, music, and dance are taught separately" (Werner, 1990, p. 130.). There is certainly convenience and sometimes appropriateness in this approach (Anderson &

Lawrence, 1982). In child-centered discovery learning, however, "integration becomes the central motif" (Goodman, 1986, p. 30).

Dewey (1959a) characterizes a child's life as an integral, total one, with no conscious isolation. "We violate the child's nature and render difficult the best ethical results, by introducing the child too abruptly to a number of special studies" (Dewey, p. 25). The National Association for the Education of Young Children suggests that "developmentally appropriate curriculum provides for all areas of a child's development: physical, emotional, social, and cognitive through an integrated approach" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 3). Problems and learning in real life do not come in narrowly defined subject areas (Bredekamp, 1987; Schubert, 1986). Thus integrated learning reflects a more natural approach.

One important benefit of integration seems to be the interrelatedness of learning. Students do not necessarily relate what they learn in different subject areas; they do not automatically make the connections. However, when teachers direct the students in their learning through activities designed to reveal the connections, students begin to relate various subject areas to each other and to out-of-school experiences (Anderson & Lawrence, 1982). In addition they become more capable of making connections between old and new material and ideas (Burnaford, 1993).

One tool for integration, the project method, was popularized by the Progressive Educators of the 1920s and 1930s and remains in child-centered methodologies. The project method "involved students in an overarching project and related many subject areas to it" (Schubert, 1986). The workshop approach of John Dewey offered a synthesis of the various subjects. "These things may be introduced, then, not as isolated studies, but as organic outgrowths of the child's experience" (Dewey, 1900, p. 113). Worthwhile projects, as prescribed by Dewey, were "sufficiently full and complex to demand a variety of responses from different children" (Dewey, 1900, p. 122). However, "an integrative model cannot be contrived. Each subject matter must keep its form without sacrifice so as not to dilute the art forms through integration" (Werner, 1990, p. 130).

Anderson and Lawrence (1982) outline various approaches to integration: analogous concept, common theme, geographic area, historical era, and large inherently integrative works that combine art forms. Certainly dramas meet the qualifications for an integrative arts work. "Such projects should not only interrelate the arts more closely but should relate the arts to the total school program" (Anderson & Lawrence, 1982, p. 32).

Dewey places promise in the use of drama to give opportunity for use of the body, the voice, movement,

construction skills, writing skills, musical composition, and performing skills, as well as knowledge in many subjects.

The possibilities for plays, festivals, and pageants arranged on this plan are endless; for it is always possible to find subject-matter which will give the children just as much training in reading, spelling, history, literature, or even some phases of geography, as would dry Grad-grind facts of a routine text-book type. (Dewey & Dewey, 1915, p. 131)

DeVries and Kohlberg (1987) also address drama in their discussion of Piagetian concepts of play. Particularly applicable are symbolic play, in which imitation and dramatization represent a form of thought and language for children, and the more advanced games of construction that Piaget described.

Many music educators are advocates of integration of music with other arts and throughout the curriculum (Anderson & Lawrence, 1982; Burnaford, 1993; Kiester, 1982, 1985; L. Kleinman, 1990; Lee, 1985; Myers, 1990; Paxcia-Bibbins, 1993; Upitis, 1990, 1992; Werner, 1990; Wiggins, 1990). These supporters either come from the music education philosophy which views integration as a means of placing children at the center of the learning experience (Swanwick, 1988) or else arrive there because of their emphasis on common and uniting elements of the arts (Plummeridge, 1991).

The development of the whole child is addressed through integration of the curriculum with an infusion of the arts (Paxcia-Bibbins, 1993). Aesthetic education is enhanced along

with the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains (Myers, 1993).

Feelings, senses, and intuition, as well as the intellectual and physical self, are nurtured, with particular emphasis on critical thinking, individual creative expression, and social responsibility. (Myers, 1993, p. 72)

Upitis (1990) suggests that integration, "as modeled by the whole language approach" (p. 8), makes music more accessible to children. Music in this scenario would be integrated "through an attitude and style of teaching that uses arts processes as naturally as books, chalkboards, and lectures" (Myers, 1990, p.72).

Advocates of integration emphasize the futility of separating the subject content areas. "Music is not separate from other disciplines: it is a part of language, a part of mathematics, a part of movement, a part of dance. No subject, if studied deeply enough, is separate from the others" (Upitis, 1990, p. 9). Further, if one observes what artists do, they often cross boundaries and make categorizing ineffectual. "What I am suggesting is that categorizing the arts themselves is essentially nothing more than useful fictions developed by critics, consumers, and academicians, scientific and otherwise" (S. Kleinman, 1990, p. 126).

Not all music educators are supportive of integration among the arts or between arts and other subject areas. Some prefer to concentrate on the distinct features of individual arts (Plummeridge, 1991). They are concerned that the arts

will lose their identity in integrated contexts (Werner, 1990). An illustration of this stance may be seen in this statement: "dance as a discipline has its own body of knowledge...each subject matter must keep its form without sacrifice so as not to dilute the art forms through integration" (Werner, 1990, p. 130).

Many music educators align with a stance which suggests both an integration of subjects and the arts taught as pure subject matter (Anderson & Lawrence, 1982, 1991; Burnaford, 1993; Kiester, 1985; Lee, 1985; Myers, 1990; Paxcia-Bibbins, 1993).

Though the arts can act as a bridge to all the subjects in the curriculum illuminating and energizing the entire curriculum, the justification for the arts in school does not depend on these kinds of relationships alone. The arts belong in the curriculum because of their intrinsic worth. (Kiester, 1985, p. 27)

Thus the arts may be both infused throughout the curriculum and taught as separate areas of study. This dual approach addresses commonalities and connections among subject areas but also specialized skills and knowledge necessary to a proficiency in the individual art forms. Both aspects contribute to a common goal: the education of children (Paxcia-Bibbins, 1993).

Relevance to Children's Lives. Within child-centered, discovery learning methodologies the starting point is the child's own instincts and powers. His or her interests and functional needs are considered in planning and guiding

learning experiences. Educational experiences and activities should be vital and real to the child, much as his or her life experiences and activities outside of school (Dewey, 1959a; Rousseau, 1762/1956; Schubert, 1986). Education should reflect life, not be isolated from it. "Relate the school to life, and all studies are of necessity related" (Dewey, 1900, p. 91). Interactions with people, materials, and ideas are more likely to happen and to be productive if the child identifies a function, a reality, a relevance to the experience. According to Dewey (1959) this relevance is increased because of the demands of social situations in which the child finds himself or herself.

Although education is often geared towards preparing children for the future, the emphasis should be on the present learning situation and should be relevant to the child at the present time (Dewey, 1959a; Rousseau, 1762/1956). Dewey explains that it is not even possible to prepare the student for exact future needs, but that education

means to give him command of himself; it means so to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities; that his eye and ear and hand may be capable of grasping the conditions under which it has to work, and the executive forces be trained to act economically and efficiently. (Dewey, 1959a, p. 22)

This kind of education will not only serve a child in the future but will enable him or her to function better now.

The emphasis on relevance to a child appears in the methodology of several content areas. In science, students'

knowledge and conception of the world are valued as starting points of instruction and situations familiar to students are used to teach process skills (Berliner, 1987; Casanova; 1987). Mathematics teaching methods are examining how children think about their mathematical learning in structuring curricula (Fennema et al., 1993).

In language arts the whole language and process writing movements center around concrete, authentic, functional, real language materials and activities which are rooted in the children's own experience (Altwerger, Edelsky, & Flores, 1989; Goodman, 1986; Goodman et al., 1989; Graves, 1983; Manning, Manning, & Long, 1989). The classroom experiences mirror language use in daily life, in the real world (Manning et al., 1989; Newman, 1985). In discussing what makes learning easy, Ken Goodman (1986) writes

It's easy when:
 It's real and natural.
 It's whole.
 It's sensible.
 It's interesting.
 It's relevant.
 It belongs to the learner.
 It's part of a real event.
 It has social utility.
 It has purpose for the learner.
 The learner chooses to use it.
 It's accessible to the learner.
 The learner has power to use it.
 (p. 8)

In music education, child-centered, discovery learning teachers also value relating students' learning in school to their own experiences and to life (Burnaford, 1993; Upitis, 1990).

If music is important at all, then it is important because it is a part of life. Music enriches our lives. Music gives us a powerful way of interpreting our worlds. Music, just like any other subject if it is explored deeply enough, can offer the means of delving into any number of inquiries about mathematics, language, physics, history, and art. I view music as a means of teaching and learning about life, as a vehicle for making our lives more challenging, as a vehicle for making our lives fuller. (Upitis, 1990, p. 31)

In music education, as in other curricular areas, this kind of learning is "rooted in firsthand experience and genuine problem solving" (Altwerger et al., 1989, p. 19).

Studies on Opera in Education

The Opera Form. According to the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, as cited by the Harvard Dictionary of Music (Apel, 1966), an opera is "a drama, either tragic or comic, sung throughout, with appropriate scenery and acting, to the accompaniment of an orchestra" (p. 505). As the most important of the forms resulting from the combination of music and theater, it enlists many different arts in its service: music, drama, poetry, acting, dance, stage-design, and costuming (1966). The opera form has certain conventions, "the most important of which is that the persons of the drama express their thoughts and feelings by means of song rather than speech" (p.505). This affects the temporal element in that sometimes there are periods of slow action or alternating periods of action and repose, as evidenced in recitative and numbers (arias, ensembles).

Charles Hamm (1966) lists several characteristic parts of an opera. These include singers, words (libretto), music, recitative, aria, duet, trio, finale, ensembles, chorus, finale, introduction, orchestra, overture, and dance.

Historically, music drama "has always been part of the life of man, from his earliest beginning...Even the most 'primitive' tribes which have survived to be studied by anthropologists have some kind of music drama" (Drummond, 1980, p. 14-15). Classical Greek tragedies and liturgical dramas and mysteries were early forms of musical drama (Apel, 1966; Drummond, 1980). Secular opera as we know it is only about four hundred years old. During its development it has changed, with shifts in importance of music and drama. Wagner transformed opera into a super-art form, Gesamtkunstwerk. He unified music and drama to the extent that constituent parts were transfigured, sacrificing individual identity for a larger possibility. He accomplished this partly through eliminating division of the music into numbers and eliminating unessential display scenes (Apel, 1966).

Despite constant renovation, sometimes opera has been "accused of being too firmly rooted in the past, of living on ancient glories rather than future prospects" (Kupferberg, 1975, p. 147). Composers have explored new techniques and have expanded opera's dimensions. It "shows every sign of remaining a viable and vital art form" (p. 149).

Opera in Child-centered Discovery Learning. Certain features of opera make it compatible with a child-centered discovery learning educational setting. One such feature is the integrative nature. "It is by its very nature a collaborative art form" (Furber, 1986, p. 51). It "combines drama, costuming, scenery, dance (on occasion), and music" (Anderson & Lawrence, 1982, p. 35). In addition opera production needs "creative writers with an understanding of philosophy and history and languages" (Furber, 1986, p. 51). Thus not only the arts are related, but also the total school program (Anderson & Lawrence, 1982).

Opera provides relevance to a child's life, important to child-centered education. "All opera/musical theater works explore the human condition" (Furber, 1986, p. 51). In addition several recent children's opera projects have focused on using problems from their lives as plot material (Fowler 1981, 1989; Lewis, 1991; Lipton, 1982; Winer, 1990).

There is a wide variety among children's opera projects in regard to how active or passive the role of the child is. Sometimes the children serve as audience, while other times they serve in roles of actor/actress, musician, composer, writer, stage hand, costumer, set constructor, producer, and publicist (Furber, 1986).

Several of the reviewed programs used opera masterworks as the material (Cohen, 1981; Fowler, 1985, 1989; L. Kleinman, 1990; Levin, 1980; Miller, 1984; Strittmatter, 1984; Wignall,

1988; Windeler, 1980). Live performances, recorded performances, and pre and post activities were standard. Other programs used musical plays written by contemporary professionals (Hill, 1980; Lewis, 1991). In a project described by Hill (1980), professionals wrote the libretto and music but left them unfinished. The students participated in the completion. In a project using the Aesop Fables (Thoms, 1982) a music teacher set classic folk tales to music. Students adapted existing children's literature and composed original music for an opera in a project described by Speake (1993).

Several of the programs emphasized that the students were responsible for all phases of creation and production of their operas (Fowler, 1981, 1985, 1989; Hove-Pabst & Anderson, 1993; Lipton, 1982; Winer, 1990). In other opera projects the students were responsible for the story and much of the music, but had substantial teacher input (Davies, 1982; Edwards, 1982). Real life experiences and relevant social and emotional issues, presented from the students' perspective, were often the subjects of student written and composed operas.

Opera America's textbook series (Fowler, 1985, 1989; Furber, 1986) includes a two-prong approach encompassing many of the characteristics of the other programs. Through four levels of curriculum, with manuals, study books, recordings, and other materials, the students are guided to listen to and

discover information about the works of others, so-called masterworks of opera. They explore the world of music and theater while becoming familiar with basic repertoire, the world of stage, and the roles of composer/librettist. They develop analytical skills and knowledge which help them become observers and evaluators. However, the other prong of the program's approach includes direct experience, in which the students themselves are responsible for all aspects of creation and production of musical theater.

Among the programs reviewed, there was wide variety in the methods and approaches used. Some of the programs involved the students in fairly passive, receptive roles. In a program described by Miller (1984) students listened to recordings after the teacher gave them information and invited them to use their "imaginative visualization". They did sing along on some of the melodies and used the presentations as a springboard for studying the elements of music. In the Levin (1980) program, she lectured prior to field trips to performing arts centers. In addition, she gave the students a written essay and synopsis ahead of time. The program included study booklets for the classroom teacher for pre or post performance use. In the Wignall project (1988) the music teacher presented lessons to the students throughout the term. The activity which culminated the experience was a marionette presentation of a masterwork. Although the program was very teacher directed, the materials did involve the children by

learning songs, writing narrative scripts, arranging some accompaniments, designing sets, and some rather marginally connected activities like drawing pictures of the characters.

In Thoms's (1982) presentation of Aesop's Fables, the teacher wrote the libretto and music. The students performed it, and faculty helped with costumes and props.

Professionals involved students in the productions in several projects. In Lewis's (1991) environmental education musical theater an adult wrote the play and professional actors performed it. The actors involved the students through interaction with them during the performance. Post-performance materials were made available to teachers, suggesting a wide variety of activities which the students could do. Some of these activities included art, dance, sculpture, poetry, and music activities.

Teaming the students with professionals was a tactic in several programs. In Dayton (Windeler, 1980), Opera Guild members produced shows within the schools. They came prepared with props and costumes. The adults performed narration and solo work, with recorded music and a professional accompanist. The students, however, filled several of the roles. Students in the audience were actively involved as well as those on stage. In an educational experience which joined a professional opera company and junior high students, one performance used Donizetti's Don Pasquale, with rather extensive adaptation, including a narration and extra parts

for students. Professionals filled the major roles (Strittmatter, 1984). In a project based on The Mikado (L. Kleinman, 1990), junior high students worked with professionals in the production itself, filling minor roles and learning about acting, costumes, make-up, and publicity through actual participation. Perhaps the most unique blending of students and professionals occurred in a program, "The Arts from the Inside Out," in which a student from a gifted program was teamed with a professional and actually helped during performances. This involved stage work as well as educational workshops (Cohen, 1981). In a project described by Hill (1980), the librettist and composer brought unfinished work to the school and the students helped with the completion. This process extended over a ten-week segment of time. Small groups of students worked with an adult in the creation. The students then performed the music theater piece.

In several projects classroom teachers and/or music teachers directed and guided the productions, but the students did most of the creating and producing, as well as all of the acting (Davies, 1982; Edwards, 1982; Hove-Pabst & Anderson, 1993; Speake, 1993). In the Davies project (1982) twenty children, age 11-13, wrote the plot; developed the characters; composed the songs; wrote the dialogue; devised instrumental pieces; designed and constructed costumes and staging; and produced the musical play. They worked on the episodic story

in small groups. Davies found that the students were initially preoccupied with the story line and needed to be prompted to consider staging possibilities and character development. She also reported a need by the students to have a final production, but along with that final production a sense of ownership and a freedom from fear of errors predominated. A major goal of her project appeared to be using opera as an integrating force. "It has long been recognized that young children do not think in terms of separate subjects, hence the development of integrated projects and topic work in the primary school" (Davies, 1982, p. 18). Davies also credited the experience with providing her, as the teacher, with insights into her students. She concluded that there are different ways to teach music and that while this format may not be the appropriate one for all musical tasks, i.e. teaching the mechanics of instrumental playing, it is appropriate and natural for combining dance, drama, music, art in a project in which process gains importance over just product.

An original first grade operetta (Edwards, 1982) also emphasized the process of a musical drama as it grew out of the children's own experience. The Edwards project had its beginning when a child announced that she had a loose tooth. The students' stories about their teeth were set into rhythmic chants and eventually couplets, which were set to music. The children developed the words and melodies individually with

some teacher editing. They developed the couplets into a rondo form and added pentatonic ostinati as accompaniments. The students presented the resultant opera, staged and produced by them, to the local Parent Teacher Association. Edwards felt the project addressed the problem of where and when to begin creative experience, stating that "the creative experience is the most meaningful part of music education" (1982, p. 44). In addition, the experience provided a springboard to the study of more traditional musical concepts.

Constance Speake (1993) describes a project in which the classroom teacher and music teacher guided the students to adapt children's literature to a play set to music. The classroom teacher integrated the experience throughout the curriculum. The music teacher used the experience to teach skills and knowledge in music.

In a Montana rural school, students, grades K-4, wrote; composed; staged; acted; and produced an original opera as a culminating activity in an integrated arts project. The classroom teacher and a music specialist acted as resources and guides, but the process and product belonged to the students (Hove-Pabst & Anderson, 1993).

Several projects followed the Metropolitan Opera Guild's educational department's children's original opera format (Fowler, 1981, 1985; Lipton, 1982; Winer, 1990) and one was loosely based on a similar format provided by England's Royal Opera House (Harland, 1990). In these projects adult

professionals served only as resources and guides. The students formed an opera company, complete with composers, writers, production managers, publicity workers, actors, and singers. The writers wrote stories based on real-life situations, relevant to the students. All of the roles and tasks of a theater production were in the hands of the students.

In Opera America's new K-12 curriculum (Fowler, 1989; Furber, 1986) students learn about opera through prepared curriculum materials. These materials include manuals and study books. In one phase of the materials, students proceed through a creation and production phase, in which they write, compose, stage, produce, and act an original opera production. The program promotes understanding and appreciation of the opera form, but also targets the students' skills, thinking, and sensibilities.

Integration in Previous Opera Studies. All of the reviewed studies of opera in education involved integration of subject areas to some extent because of the definition of opera itself; it is a combination of music, drama, visual arts, and often other areas. "It is, by the very nature of the product, interdisciplinary arts education" (Smith, 1993, p. 61).

In some studies this integration existed chiefly among the arts. In a project involving gifted students in grades two through six, a goal was to give the students a wide base

of experience and exposure in many art forms. They would then be better able to select areas for specialization. They participated in workshops with topics such as set building, lighting, and prop building. Later each student apprenticed with a professional in some aspect of production (Cohen, 1981).

Other opera projects integrated not only the arts but also other content areas. A project in which the main goal was using the arts to educate children about environmental issues, had suggested follow-up lessons in art, drama, music, sculpture, and poetry (Lewis, 1991).

Fowler (1989) describes the interdisciplinary nature of many productions citing history, language, and literature in particular as components. In her description of a performance by junior high school students, Strittmatter (1984) mentions involvement of math in designing staging and scenery, of industrial arts in building sets, of home economics in making costumes, of social studies in researching the historical period, of English in writing bulletins and programs, of physical education in choreography, and of camera club with audiovisual offerings. Winer (1990), who writes about a project in which children created all aspects of the production, cites inclusion of music through composition and performance, of English in the writing of scripts and development of plot and characters, of math in measuring for

flats, and of science in learning about volts and amps as part of lighting.

Speake (1993) describes a project involving the students' adaptation of an existing piece of children's literature from their language arts class. In addition, the classroom teacher purposefully centered work in physical education, social studies, science, and language arts around the opera.

Harland (1990), reporting on a student original opera in an English residential school for troubled youth, includes integration throughout the curriculum as a major goal of their project. They intended to relate all areas of study to the opera during one phase of their project. This goal, however, fell far short of their expectations in their first opera attempt.

Language arts was a curricular emphasis especially in those studies which involved the children's own writing (Davies, 1982; Edwards, 1982; Hill, 1980; Hove-Pabst & Anderson, 1993; Lipton, 1982; Winer, 1990). Fowler (1989) describes the structure of story--plot, characters, and setting--which received much attention. Davies (1982), working with children ages 11-13, prescribed in-depth exploration of characters and plot after realizing that her students were preoccupied with the episodes of the plot. In the Cohen (1981) study students explored various ways of recording and communicating their experiences with the arts. They used

interviews, vocabulary books, video and slide presentations, and personal logs.

In a study by Hill (1980) the librettist brought a nearly-finished opera to the students. They revised and finished it as a combined effort of a professional writer and students.

Students used television writing as a model in an opera creation study by Lipton (1982). They studied the structure and used the component parts: opening teaser, exposition of characters and situation, crisis and resolution, and a final tag. In a music teacher's operatic setting of Aesop's Fables (Thoms, 1982), traditional literature and ethics lessons were presented and studied.

These studies show ways that other subject areas contribute to opera. They also demonstrate how opera can input "new life and interest in subject matter of the regular school curriculum" (Frischkorn, 1961, p. 105).

Relevance in Previous Opera Studies. Opera, whether a masterwork or an original student creation, provides a means for humans to tell a story (Fowler, 1989; Smith, 1993). Marthalie Furber, educational director of Opera America, says of storytelling:

That process is one of the most important means for learning about ourselves and the world we live in. Story sharing and story telling are important ways we learn to cope. They teach us the lessons of life, and that is one of the essentials of opera. (Fowler, 1989, p. 36)

In a general sense opera tells of the human condition and values (Cohen, 1981; Fowler, 1989; Levin, 1980). It is an expression "of what mankind tries to say about itself" (Lipton, 1982, p. 58).

In several of the opera studies, the students wrote the stories which form the basis for their opera. These stories often were about their lives and their problems or about social issues which are important to them (Edwards, 1982; Lipton, 1982; Winer, 1990).

In the study by Edwards (1982) the origin of the story was a first grade student's telling about losing a tooth. Soon other students were telling their stories about tooth-loss. These tales eventually became the libretto for the opera.

The projects modeled after the Metropolitan Opera Guild student operas specifically addressed social issues relevant to students (Fowler, 1981, 1989; Harland, 1990; Lipton, 1982; Winer, 1990). The students' stories originated in their own experience and from their own lives. Thus the project became a forum for students' concerns.

Relevance extended beyond the plots and characters of the operas. Students could apply the skills, knowledge, and experience which they gained from the opera projects to their lives, both in and out of school.

The goals of some programs contained an emphasis on the value of aesthetic experiences (Cohen, 1981; Edwards, 1982;

Fowler, 1989; Speake, 1993). Aesthetics education is certainly a facet of arts education, as well as of life. "Aesthetic experience is as pervasive as cognitive and practical activity, and...there are skills of aesthetic impression and expression that can, if cultivated under tuition, change the quality of that experience" (Broudy, 1979, p. 348). The opera projects attempted to teach skills of aesthetics. These experiences altered sensibilities, aroused curiosity, increased sensitivity, and heightened perceptions, serving outside of school as well as in school (Fowler, 1989).

General thinking skills, creativity, and problem solving were emphases in some programs (Cohen, 1981; Edwards, 1982; Fowler, 1989; Harland, 1990; Hill, 1980; Lewis, 1991; Thoms, 1982; Winer, 1990). These skills are not gained through drill nor dispensed by a teacher to a student,

but if you give him confidence and responsibility and tools for thinking, he's way ahead in every discipline. That's what this project does--it uses opera as a vehicle for learning, and it teaches the whole child. (Winer, 1990, p. 45)

Certainly one of the life tools developed through the projects was that of communication and expression. Practice in speaking before others was gained through rehearsal and performance (Frischkorn, 1961). Students also benefitted by using opera as a medium with which to communicate a viewpoint, through written language, dramatization, speech, and body language (Cohen, 1981; Fowler, 1981, 1985, 1989).

The opera projects targeted the affective domain. Observers noted personal assets such as pride, heightened self-esteem, accomplishment, independence, and confidence (Cohen, 1981; Harland, 1990). Work in small groups as well as large groups and partnerships promoted cooperative learning and collaboration (Davies, 1982; Edwards, 1982; Fowler, 1985, 1989; Frischkorn, 1961; Harland, 1990; Lipton, 1982; Winer, 1990).

The Projects involved parents and community members in various ways. Many projects resulted in performances at the end of the projects (Davies, 1982; Edwards, 1982, Frischkorn, 1961; Harland, 1990; Hill, 1980; Hove-Pabst & Anderson, 1993; L. Kleinman, 1990; Lipton, 1982; Strittmatter, 1984; Thoms, 1982; Winer, 1990). In one study (Fowler, 1981) the adult facilitators met with parents to explain the goals and procedures of the project. The local newspaper and community businesses were supportive in the Harland study (1990). In fact, they printed and circulated T-shirts to advertise the event.

Several studies addressed career possibilities which were investigated through the opera projects (Cohen, 1981; Harland, 1990; Fowler, 1981). In the Cohen project each student teamed up with a mentor in the field and worked backstage in real productions as an apprentice (1981). The Metropolitan Opera Guild models put the students in the actual structure and roles of a professional company, with very real job

descriptions, auditions, responsibility, and accountability (Lipton, 1982; Harland, 1990; Winer, 1990).

In examining opera's relevance to students' lives, one might question elitism within the art form. In traditional settings opera is often not readily available to all students, due in part to geographical and financial concerns (Furber, 1986). Swanwick (1988) recognizes cultural exclusiveness as a factor in valuing. "It is undeniable that our perception of and response to music is influenced by the position it is seen to occupy in a value framework" (p. 90). Opera can be alienating when there is no perceived relationship to a person's culture (Swanwick, 1988; Winer, 1990). In addition to its identification with an outside culture (Swanwick, 1988) opera is often defined in terms of the traditional 18th and 19th century Grand Opera, which "has further limited its attractiveness as an integral part of vital, changing education needs and values" (Furber, 1986, p. 51).

This elitist image can be overcome, however, when opera is made more accessible to students. When students engage in the creation and production of original opera, they learn to use opera as a tool for exploration of themselves and the world of people, things, and ideas. Students communicate their thoughts, knowledge, and feelings to their audience through libretto, music, and production. The opera form thus becomes not an alien mode of expression but a comfortable, functional learning tool. While making their own operas part

of their lives (and their lives part of their operas) the students enable themselves to explore the operas of others, perhaps leading to increased understanding and enjoyment. What might have formerly been available to few can be available to many. Opera then becomes more populist (Fowler, 1989). "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children" (Dewey, 1900, p.7).

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

This study examined in detail what happened during a project in which rural elementary school children created and produced an original opera. I chose the qualitative case study research design and the researcher role of participant observer to facilitate this examination. The discipline of education depends on research to expand the knowledge base and to provide a means of "understanding, informing, and improving practice" (Merriam, 1988, p.6). Conforming to the definition of research as a systematic inquiry, the case study is one research design that can be used to study a phenomenon systematically.

In the written report of the research, "the project" refers to the actual creation and production of the opera, as well as the lessons and skills sessions which contributed to it. "The study" or "the research" refers to the qualitative case study, the naturalistic research which I conducted before, during, and after the actual project.

Population Description and
Sampling Procedure

The students in the study were originally nine boys and one girl in grades kindergarten through five who attend Four

Oaks School in Crook County, Eastern Wyoming. During the opera project the fifth grade boy moved to a different school. The remaining nine students belonged to four families: one family had a boy in grade 4 and a boy in kindergarten; one family had a boy in grade 4; one family had a girl in grade 3 and a boy in kindergarten; and one family had four boys, one in grade 3, one in grade 2, and twins in kindergarten.

Four Oaks School is part of the Crook County School District Number One, with administration offices located in Sundance, Wyoming. There is one home room, with an additional room for small group activities and a basement room for lunch, art, music, physical education and programs. The school is surrounded by a large play area, with playground equipment. There is a nearby pond for winter ice skating.

The school has one teacher, Mrs. Willa Henriksen, and a part-time aide. The principal, Mr. Blankenship, has his offices at Hulette, Wyoming.

The remote school is located approximately 10 miles from the village of Aladdin, Wyoming, population 15, and approximately 25 miles from Belle Fourche, South Dakota, and Sundance, Wyoming. Four Oaks is 40 miles from the small university town of Spearfish, South Dakota. Approximately the last 10 miles of road leading to the school is a single lane dirt/shale road. The area around Four Oaks is agricultural land and the parents of the children are ranchers or ranch workers.

Four Oaks was chosen for the research site because of its location, its size, the age configuration of the student body, and the willingness of the classroom teacher and district administration. I am an assistant professor at Black Hills State University, Spearfish, South Dakota, so the location was convenient as well as relevant to my teaching situation. I am interested in one-room rural schools for several reasons: because of the controversy surrounding them in regards to consolidation, because of the vertical age grouping, and because I worked in a one-room rural school previously with an original student opera project.

The sampling procedure which was used is characterized as nonprobability sampling. There was no way of estimating the probability that each element would be included in the sample (Merriam, 1988). The research topic shaped the selection of the place and people for the study, thus constituting purposive sampling (Casey, 1992; Fetterman, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There is an assumption in use of purposive sampling that I wanted to discover, understand, and gain insight, and therefore selected the sample from which I could learn the most (Merriam, 1988). Further this research may be called comprehensive in that each student in the relevant population, Four Oaks School, was included (Merriam, 1988).

Qualitative Case Study

Choice of the Qualitative Case Study

The research design chosen for this project was a qualitative case study. Four issues outlined by Merriam (1988) in consideration of the design included (a) the nature of the research question, (b) the amount of control within the research, (c) the desired end product, and (d) whether a bounded system could be identified.

In addressing the nature of the research problem, Merriam cited Yin as she wrote, "'How' and 'why' questions are appropriate for case study" (1988, p. 9). Of particular interest are insight, discovery, understanding, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing. "This approach aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon" (Merriam, 1988, p. 10). The researcher in qualitative case study strives to examine a phenomenon holistically (Bresler & Stake, 1992; Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). "The precision is in the recording of social life as a meaningful whole, not as the sum of lifeless quantitative units" (Feagin et al., 1991, p. 12). In so doing the context of the data was of importance (Bresler & Stake, 1992; Feagin et al., 1991; Merriam, 1988), as was the perspective of those being studied (Fetterman, 1989). Qualitative case studies are heuristic; they are

designed to shed meaning and to illuminate (Bresler & Stake, 1992; Merriam, 1988).

In the opera project I wanted to study how rural elementary students interact with the opera form. The processes, both social and cognitive, which the students used as they created and produced their opera were of interest. The natural setting, inherent in a qualitative case study, was necessary for addressing the research problem. The question, "What happens when students interact with opera?", suggested an open ended research problem without pre-determined hypotheses.

The second issue, that of control within the research, was examined from two perspectives. I served in the dual role of participant and observer. As a participant, I was a teacher and curriculum developer. As a teacher, I modeled the role of fellow learner, guide, resource, manager, catalyst, and facilitator. Whenever I was interacting with the children I was in the role of teacher. As a curriculum developer, I designed the curriculum which served as the basis for the original student opera project. I chose the opera form and the accompanying activities as the content. These aspects, the teacher, the curriculum, and the content (opera), had the potential to influence the behavior and interactions within the school setting as teachers, curriculum designers, and content always have.

When I was not directly working with the children I was a researcher. In the role of researcher, I refrained from manipulation of subjects and of data. I watched and took part, but did not alter the processual direction (Woods, 1986). I recorded my observations and collected the students' conversations and discussion verbatim. I used various sources of documentation to reduce my subjectivity and to increase the integrity.

Important in a qualitative case study is the lack of control exercised by the variables and the questions. The variables and questions are not determined ahead of time nor are the variables controlled. The qualitative case study studies many, if not all, of the variables. The interaction among the variables is studied as it occurs without an attempt to isolate only certain units or interactions (Bresler & Stake, 1992; Merriam, 1986).

The end product of the qualitative case study was viewed from two perspectives: form and substance. The substance of the study was understanding, not prediction or control (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The information may add to the existing knowledge base, but may also inform practice. The form of the research is found in field notes, interviews, written documents, tapes, videos, and photographs, culminating in a written narrative. The end product is "a holistic, intensive description and interpretation of a contemporary phenomenon" (Merriam, 1988, p. 9).

"A fourth and probably deciding factor is whether a bounded system can be identified as the focus of the investigation" (Merriam, 1988, p. 9). The bounded system in this research was a learning project in which a group of rural children interacted with opera in an original opera project. In this respect, the research was particularistic, focusing on a particular situation (Merriam, 1988).

Contributions from Other Disciplines

Much of the methodology of the qualitative case study originated in anthropology. Ethnography, the study of a culture in its natural setting, is represented in technique if not always in scope (Fetterman, 1989; Merriam, 1988). In the case study, field work, with the researcher as the main investigative tool, is essential. Research is characterized by rich description of what the researcher observes and augmented with artifacts, written documents, photos, tapes, and other forms of documentation. The perspective of those people studied, their reality, is the content for study. The researcher collects data from the insider's point of view, emic, while later interprets it from the outsider's view, etic (Fetterman, 1989).

Sociology contributed a model for study with a backdrop of the social setting. Descriptive data grounded in real life situations are used to build theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1980).

In music education research, Francois Couperin's L'Art de Toucher le Clavicin, originally published in 1717, is an early music pedagogy, based on observations of student behavior (Bresler & Stake, 1992). Ethnomusicology, a field in music which has roots in anthropology and musicology, uses both fact-gathering description and approaches delving into the use and function of music in societies (Bresler & Stake, 1992). A model for qualitative case study in music education can be found in the Pillsbury Foundation Study by Moorhead and Pond (Moorhead & Pond, 1941, 1942, 1944, 1951). This study was carried out in the 1940s and included direct observation of children's musical development with interpretation through analysis of free musical play. Models of children's creation and use of original notational systems for composition may be found from Bamberger (1982) and Upitis (1986).

In the field of education many researchers have carried out naturalistic studies in order to furnish rich descriptions of children's behavior and learning within a classroom experience (Fennema, 1993; McClure, 1990; Newman, 1985; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Weaver, 1990). These experiences have been further documented by other sources. A researcher examines the data for emerging patterns and themes which provide further insight into and understanding of the learning process. Often the participant-observer role is adapted because "by becoming part of their world (the researchers)

hoped to gain a clearer understanding of their perceptions about the process" (McClure, 1990, p. 10).

The Role as Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative case study is that of a participant observer. This role granted close contact with the students and an immersion in the setting. By my presence in the field I was able to make detailed observations (Bresler & Stake, 1992; Fetterman, 1989; Merriam, 1988; Spradley, 1980; Woods, 1986). As the primary instrument of data gathering (Feagin et al., 1991; Fetterman, 1989; Merriam, 1988; Spradley, 1980), I not only recorded observed data, but also set the stage for other techniques, such as artifacts, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, photography, video and audio tapes (Fetterman, 1989). It was necessary for me to combine participation in the lives of the students with maintaining a professional distance (Fetterman, 1989).

In my participatory role as teacher and curriculum developer I interacted with the children, lending direction and guidance. This occurred while I was an active player in the experience. Because I was a participant I could bring an insider's viewpoint to the study, an emic view (Bresler & Stake, 1992; Fetterman; 1989). This view was reflected in interpretive notes made throughout the study.

As the observer I recorded observations, transcribed tapes, gathered written documentation, and administered

interviews and questionnaires. I later analyzed the data. I did this from an outsider's stance, the etic view (Bresler & Stake, 1992; Fetterman; 1989). This occurred when I was not directly interacting with the students or their work.

Fetterman (1989) and Bresler and Stake (1992) describe an early panoramic view, broad in first observations, which then becomes narrower and more focused on details through selection. Ultimately this view pans out to a larger picture again, with new understanding. These dimensions are congruent with my experience as researcher. In the early stages I had a broad view of the opera project. As I analyzed the data my view narrowed to concentrate on certain themes or categories which emerged. Later I looked at the total picture as I interpreted the findings and wrote about them.

Explanation of Project Procedure

I traveled to the site, Four Oaks Rural School, twice a week for sixteen work sessions and a performance. This schedule occurred over a two-month period during September, October, and November, 1993. Each session lasted approximately one and a half hours. I scheduled two post-performance visits one month and three months after the performance.

The initial visit included preliminary work of getting acquainted with the students, teacher, and facilities. I photographed each child to assist me in identifying the students by name. In addition some music activities and story

telling set the stage for integrated arts activities and laid a foundation for future work/research. I requested that each student write in a project journal, which I provided. We established an atmosphere of comfort and casualness. We agreed that although I was a teacher, I was also a co-worker and fellow-learner.

The next visits involved exploration of the circle story form. For this segment of the project I followed the suggestions of Mary Jett-Simpson (1981). I read a circle story to the students, Millions of Cats, by Wanda Gag (1928). They discussed the form and then illustrated the story, using a circular shape divided into wedges for the episodes of the plot. The children created illustrations in three small groups of three or four students. Following this examination of another author's work, the students created original circle stories, working first as a whole class and then in two small groups. The students shared their stories and illustrations orally and visually. In a final step, we combined their two original stories into one which would be used as the text for their opera.

I then presented information on the form of opera, including a discussion of the various parts of opera, roles of workers, and terminology. The students experienced the form by acting out a familiar folk story, "The Three Little Pigs," in which the actors and actresses improvised the dramatization and singing.

The entire group discussed and listed some of the characteristics of an opera that should be considered in dramatizing the story. These included scenery, costumes, singing (lyrics and melody), incidental music, overture, and movement. We outlined other aspects such as building the sets, constructing the costumes, make up, promotion, and written programs for future discussion.

The actual creation of the opera occurred sometimes with the whole group, while other times with smaller sub-groups. The students said or sometimes sang suggested lines, repeating them and changing them until they were satisfactory to them. In this way they created each song, following the story line of their original story. I notated the songs as they were completed. The students critiqued and revised throughout the process. For one of the songs I directed them to write rhyming couplets for the lyrics. For another I provided them with bells in a pentatonic scale, which they used for the notes. But in the other instances they sang and I recorded what they sang.

Once they composed the songs, we began rehearsals. They all learned the parts to some degree before we had informal auditions. I chose the cast and they worked on their individual and group numbers.

While we practiced the music and the dramatization, they planned costumes and scenery with their classroom teacher. They also planned and executed the publicity. A dress

rehearsal was followed by the final performance, a night performance attended by parents and community members and followed by a social "cast party".

One month after the performance I returned to the school to do some follow-up activities. I read them the book Madame Nightingale Will Sing Tonight (Mayhew, 1991), about animals in the forest putting on an original opera. We also viewed the video of the opera "Hansel and Gretel" (Humperdinck, 1982). Three months after the performance I returned and shared the video of the opera "Amahl and the Night Visitors" (Menotti, 1978) with them.

Simultaneously with the creation and production of the opera, I conducted singing skills sessions. We worked on breathing, voice registers, melodic contours, and pitch accuracy. Along with exercises, we sang songs and song games.

Methods of Data Collection

In ethnographic research, the human instrument is the prevalent research instrument (Bresler & Stake, 1992; Casey, 1992; Feagin et al., 1991; Fetterman, 1989; Merriam, 1988; Spradley, 1980; Woods, 1985). The observations of the participant/observer are complemented by an array of other investigative tools in order to gather data.

In the role of participant/observer, I kept a written record of the original student opera project. This record included detailed description of everything I observed.

Whenever possible I wrote verbatim quotations from the participants. Initially these field notes were written in a loose leaf, binder notebook. I used a two-sided entry form, as suggested by Fetterman and Woods. On one side I took notes in the field, coincident with the events; on the other side I added reflective notes, clarifications, extensions, and questions (Fetterman, 1989; Woods, 1985).

A part-time assistant took some field notes. These notes were of limited value, as they did not contain verbatim quotations. They did serve to verify what the tapes and my notes revealed. Unfortunately the assistant could only attend three working sessions.

Because I was actively involved in the project, note taking became increasingly difficult. I came to depend heavily on audio recorders. I placed at least two recorders at strategic places during all of the sessions. I later transcribed all of the recorded material into written form.

A video recorder was used during two work sessions as well as during the dress rehearsal and production. This was operated by a recent music school graduate. I transcribed the taped events into a written form.

I interviewed each student individually twice during the project. These interviews were based on questions determined prior to the interviews and printed on cue cards to ensure that I covered the intended agenda (Bresler & Stake, 1991; Casey, 1992; Fetterman, 1989; Woods, 1986). The interviews

were presented in a casual, informal manner. I recorded the responses on audio tape, except in the case of one boy who did not like being taped. I recorded his responses on paper. I later transcribed the interviews into written form. The interviews helped explain and put into context the observations. They provided verbal interaction between the students and me, in the role of researcher. In turn this helped clarify what the students thought and felt.

I also interviewed the classroom teacher as a key actor or informant in the project (Fetterman, 1989). I formulated the questions prior to the interview and presented them in an informal manner. I taped the responses and later transcribed them into written form. In addition the classroom teacher filled out a checklist of observed benefits, composed by a classroom teacher who was involved in a previous original student opera project.

The audience filled out a survey questionnaire after the opera performance, during a post-opera reception. This questionnaire broadened the scope of the research to include the aspects of family and community. Questions on the survey were both open ended and closed ended, with "complete the sentence" answers (Fetterman, 1989; Woods, 1986).

Other forms of documentation included student writing. Students were asked to write in opera journals during the project. Because this was requested by me it lost some of its unobtrusiveness (Woods, 1986). I found that the journals were

not used very much, perhaps because I was not there to continuously inquire about their use. Other written materials used to document the study included newsletter articles and letters to pen-pals the students acquired. The pen-pals were students who had participated in a former original student opera project.

I used photographs to document various phases of the process and the product, the opera production. The performance itself was considered a key event (Fetterman, 1989), essential to examining the relationship between process and product.

The variety of sources of data served comparative purposes. Also the comparison of sources furnished a measure of validity and reliability through triangulation (Bresler & Stake, 1992; Fetterman, 1989; Merriam, 1988).

Data Analysis and the Written Research

Analysis of the data took place both during the data gathering stage and, more intensely, at the conclusion of that stage. From this analysis I formed my interpretation of the data, with suggestions for theory, future research, and practice. I then wrote the analysis and interpretation of the data, along with a detailed description of the project, in a narrative form.

When I began the original student opera project I had some tentative questions in mind. These questions had

resulted from an earlier original student opera project at McLeod, Montana (Hove-Pabst & Anderson, 1993). The tentative questions included these areas of interest: (a) how songs were actually created, (b) how decisions were made, (c) how the vertical age grouping affected decisions, (d) how much integration of subject matter occurred, and (e) what attitudes, knowledge, and skills existed relative to opera production.

I did not want these early categories to direct the data collection or analysis. I wanted the questions and themes or categories to emerge from the data. The questions did, however, furnish some early organization tools.

Analysis of the data initially occurred simultaneously with collection of the data (Fetterman, 1989). Woods (1986) termed this early analysis speculative, characterizing it as tentative reflection, perhaps revealing major insights. Spradley (1980) observed that both questions and answers were discovered in the process. As I reviewed notes and transcribed tapes during the gathering stage, I noted patterns, themes, and questions that seemed to be emerging from the data. Some of these notes coordinated with the tentative questions and some did not.

The conclusion of data gathering brought a period of more intense analysis. It was necessary to reconfigure all notes and to order them in a systematic way. I transcribed all descriptions and quotations into written form. I ordered them

in chronological order. Then I re-read them, noting key concepts and questions. As I organized the data two main categories emerged. These categories were integration of subject areas and relevance to the children's lives.

Once these two major categories were identified, I marshalled the data behind them (Woods, 1986). According to Woods, (1986) every aspect of material should be accommodated within some category, but hopefully not in more than one. Because I narrowed my study to these two areas, I did not find that all the data fit into the categories, although it did fit into the detailed description. Some of it suggested other categories for study, perhaps at a later date.

From these two categories, complete with supportive data, I formed subcategories which became the basis for my questions. These subcategories included prevalence of integration of subject areas, subject areas involved in integration, source of integration (opera form, project design, or personnel), and relevance to the children's lives.

I had intended to use colored note cards and a filing system for this systematic analysis. Instead, what I found effective for me was to color code areas of the transcriptions and notes with colored pencils. I used different colors for various subject areas, interjecting key words indicating the source of integration and other pertinent information. I also color coded sections of the documentation that revealed relevance to the children's lives.

At this time I re-read some of the literature I had reviewed with the two categories, integration and relevance, specifically in mind. The data analysis and the renewed review of the literature led to the final version of the questions and to my interpretation and conclusions. In addition to the documentation, I used tacit information and my perceptions in forming my interpretations and conclusions.

In the final stages, I wrote the research findings in a literary, narrative style (Feagin et al., 1991). The written form is primarily descriptive, but includes abundant verbatim conversation of the children. My interpretation and, to some extent, evaluation of the opera project are also in evidence. I made an attempt to be precise and disciplined, but also graphic, readable, and imaginative (Feagin et al., 1991). At this stage of research into original student opera, as part of child-centered, discovery learning in music education, I felt rich, detailed description was a large and valid part of the research product, perhaps even more so than my analysis and interpretation.

Limitations and Delimitation

The students in the study were rural children who were expected to have little or no previous experience with opera and probably very little knowledge of the form. This expectation was found to be true. Their original student opera experience would not be identical with that of another

group of children, particularly children who may have greater access to opera or to music and arts experiences in general.

Other factors may have contributed to the findings. The children's ages and developmental stages may have affected their actions and decision making. In this rural school, children of several ages are grouped together (vertical grouping). I may have found different results with a homogenous age group of children and/or children younger or older than the children of this project. This group was predominately male; groups with a different gender configuration may produce different results. The small size of the group also may have been a variable.

Appropriate to qualitative case study, the data gained from these children were idiosyncratic, not necessarily generalizable to other populations. However, the study may give information applicable to similar cases or may illuminate a general problem (Merriam, 1988). Merriam cites Eisner as saying that what one learns in a particular situation is transferable to other situations. Part of the responsibility for external validity lies with the readers of studies. They need to decide to what extent the research is applicable to any individual setting or to the general area of study (Merriam, 1988).

I inserted subjectivity when I chose the research problem, observed and took field notes, assembled documentation, and analyzed the data. Woods (1986) points out

that one cannot accomplish total objectivity. I addressed the issue of validity primarily through triangulation of sources. The notes, the photographs, the tapes, the interviews, the journal entries--all of these were compared for similarity or discrepancy. Also I attempted to record exact quotations and objective observations, rather than paraphrasing and interpreting during the actual note taking. Internal validity was further increased by member checks, checking with the classroom teacher, a part-time assistant, and a classroom teacher who was a former participant in an opera project (Merriam, 1988).

With all the safeguards of validity, there still remains the multiple reality preface of qualitative case study, which suggests that there is not one reality, not one truth, thus arguable applicability of internal validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research must strive for internal integrity. Triangulation of sources, verbatim quotations, and member checks contributed to integrity in this study.

One standard of reliability is that a study can be replicated with uniform results. A qualitative case study is immersed in the particularistic setting, the context. Thus another context will produce different data. Fetterman (1989) suggested that ethnographers look for patterns of thought and behavior, which then become a form of reliability. Merriam (1988) presented the view that various aspects of the study can become more reliable. For instance, the observer can

train and practice to become more reliable. I had previous experience in a similar setting, and that helped prepare me for this setting.

The reliability of certain documents and personal accounts may be strengthened through analysis and triangulation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that a demonstration of internal validity, creditability, amounts to a simultaneous demonstration of reliability.

The breadth and depth of this study was limited by outside factors. Ideally a full ethnography would have involved long-term, on-site field work. Fiscal, time, distance, personal, professional, and even weather considerations required that this qualitative case study encompass a limited time period, approximately two months in the field and six months after field work.

CHAPTER 3

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

This chapter contains a detailed description of the original student opera project. Data will include narrative description and excerpted dialogue. In the verbatim dialogue, the students are identified by initial and grade level. Acting in the role of music teacher, I am identified as Mus. The classroom teacher is identified as MSH. A visiting music graduate is identified as Vis. When certain identity of a speaker cannot be made, he or she is referred to as ID?. The conversations and comments, both verbal and written, are transcribed verbatim. No attempt has been made to correct spelling, grammar, or language conventions of any kind.

I traveled to the site, Four Oaks School, a total of 19 times, mostly during September, October, and November, 1993. Each visit entailed approximately one and one-half hours of contact time with the students. The initial visit was designed for getting acquainted with the children, the teacher, and the facilities. The next 15 visits were devoted to the children's creating and rehearsing the original opera, along with acquisition of skills and knowledge conducive to that task. These visits occurred twice weekly, on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. The final production was

an evening performance. This performance was followed by two follow-up visits to give closure to the project.

Preparatory Phase

During the initial visit we all introduced ourselves. I took pictures of the students to help me identify them and remember their names. One of the children was sick and the kindergarten students were not present. The kindergartners subsequently changed their attendance days to match my visit as they attended only two full days per week.

The students showed me their school, including the large basement area with a makeshift stage, a platform raised nine inches. This is where we held many of our work sessions and where we had the performance.

We talked about where they live and what they do. They told me about the many animals in their lives, cows, pigs, horses, dogs, and cats. I told them about me, about my work as a music education professor, and about the research project I wanted to do with children. I explained that I would help them, but they would be doing the work of making up a story, composing music and libretto for an opera made from the story, and performing the opera for their parents and community members. I asked them if they knew what an opera is. Although four said yes, when prodded for further information the only responses were these.

G-5: Italians and Vikings like them. They sing, "ooo". (He threw back his head and warbled.) I'm

Italian.

J-3: Yeah, they sing and they have these cardboard things.

To conclude the initial meeting, I sang songs with them which were intended to involve them. One was a cumulative song, in which they added their suggested words. Another had a movement game to accompany the singing. A third involved "copy cat" passages with various contours, pitches, and tone colors. The students' imitations indicated that we had a lot of work to do.

During the second meeting I became acquainted with the rest of the students and took their pictures. I also distributed notebooks. I asked them to use these to write any questions or comments they had about opera or our project. Also they could include pictures and writing assignments from the project.

Singing Skills

I realized that if the students were going to successfully sing their opera they would need to work on their singing skills. We did songs, song games, and vocal exercises each time we met. We called this aspect of the project our singing team. We worked on posture and breathing techniques. We stretched and rolled our shoulders back. We practiced deep breathing with our abdominal region, using exercises that simulated a balloon filling and letting out air as we lay on our backs or bent over from the waist. Initial vocal

exercises targeted achieving melodic contour and distinguishing between speaking and singing. One of the students remarked that singing was like writing cursive, while speaking was more like printing. We used imagery, such as an invisible mouse puppet held high in the air, in order to lend a visual aid to our search for our high vocal registers. Pitch matching began with general highs and lows of speech patterns and swooping, gliding, siren-like echoes. Later we used echo patterns on the minor third interval. Finally we echoed excerpts from their songs. Usually these singing team activities began our sessions, although sometimes we interrupted rehearsal to work on voice skills.

Story Phase

We began work leading to the creation of our opera story. Because of the limited time and my lack of knowledge about the extent of their writing, I chose to use a model story form. The article "Writing stories using model structures: The circle story," by Mary Jett-Simpson (1981) served as a guide.

The first step was to explore the chosen story form, that of the circle story. I drew a big circle with several "pie-wedge" segments. At the top I drew a little house. I explained that a circle story begins and ends at a "home-like" location. The character(s) and the problem are introduced in the first segment. Each additional segment represents an adventure, or one step of action involved in the solution of

the problems (episodes of the plot). A solution is finally found as the character(s) returns to the home setting.

I then read the story, Millions of Cats (Gag, 1928), to them, showing them the illustrations as I read. In the story an old man and an old woman lived in a comfortable, happy house. They were lonely, a condition which they decided to remedy by getting a cat. The old man left home in search of the cat. Through several episodes the story unfolds until finally the old man and the old woman ended up in their happy home with a cat.

After reading the story I guided them in a discussion. Sample questions included: Who were the characters? What was the problem? What happened and in what order did it happen? How was the problem finally solved? What was the ending?

The children were divided into three groups. Each group decided how many things happened. They drew a large circle and divided it into enough wedges to allow one for each episode and one to start and end. They drew a small house to indicate the beginning and ending. Working with newsprint, colors, markers, and pencils, they illustrated the story. When they finished, we hung the three pictures on the wall and took photographs. They took turns telling the story, using the illustrations to guide them.

To conclude our second meeting we played song games. I did most of the singing while they joined in the movement. With the song "Circle Left" we did some musical cloze, in

which we left out a word and substituted other words (Mateja, 1982).

During the third visit our main focus was continued work on circle stories. Before we began, however, I asked if they had thought of any questions about opera or our projects.

Z-4: Why do they even have opera?

This gave me an opening to discuss the historical aspects of story telling, music, dance, and visual art, art forms which have been ever present in cultures. I explained that eventually these activities took on a more formal form, opera, in which a story was acted out with singing, instruments, dancing, costumes, scenery, and sets.

P-4: What are we going to do for the opera?

This invited me to outline the steps of our opera creation: writing the story, making it into a play which is sung by the actors and actresses, arranging for costumes, writing publicity, making scenery, and finally performing the opera for an audience.

At this time I had a question for them. A one-room rural school in Montana had created and produced an original student opera two years earlier with my assistance. Their teacher had suggested to me that those students would like to be penpals with the Four Oaks students. The Four Oaks students enthusiastically agreed and I promised to send a list of names and ages to the Montana students. While we worked on the opera project, the students did exchange letters.

The primary business of this meeting was, however, getting practice with the circle story form. We reviewed the story Millions of Cats and discussed what we remembered about the circle story form. Then they made up a circle story with my guidance.

Mus: Where could we have our story start?

Z-4: House.

C-3: Barn.

Z-4: Yeah, a barn.

G-5: In a movie theater, on a stage.

After suggestions and a brief discussion they voted on the location.

Mus: Now what characters should we have?

Z-4: A horse.

C-3: A horse and a cow.

There were several more suggestions by others.

Z-4: No, a horse, because he doesn't have a friend. He wants to find a friend.

Continuing in this question-response-consensus format we developed a story in which the horse approached several animals in different locations, asking them to be friends.

Finally the horse

G-5: meets his friend and then they go back to the barn and he gives them some hay.

This completed the circle and the story.

At this point the students used pictures and/or words to record the story in their opera notebooks.

G-5: Can we do our own stories?

That, of course, was the next step.

During the fourth meeting the students worked in two groups. They were instructed to make up a story, beginning with who the characters were, where it took place, and what the problem was. The character(s) would then proceed through several episodic adventures, finally solving the problem and returning to the starting point. They used the pie-wedge diagram to guide them as they constructed their stories. In their groups individual students made multiple suggestions, sometimes meeting with agreement, sometimes disagreement. Through cooperating and compromising, they finally ended up with two original stories. At times one student would take charge for a while and direct the activity.

C-3: Draw the house. Let somebody draw the house.

P-4: Wait, wait. Before we have to think of what the house is going to look like.

C-3: Just make a house like here.

Usually, however, the group members worked cooperatively with an exchange of ideas and expansion on the ideas of others.

P-4: I'm just looking.

C-3: What's the cow looking for?

J-3: The cow would be looking for her babies.

C-3: Yeah, and she has twins.

J-3: And she lost them.

P-4: Yes, and we have one of the twins right here.

During this time I observed, asked questions, and made suggestions. In order to help them get beyond the strictly episodic story, I asked them what kinds of things make a story exciting for them. We talked about danger, suspense, and mystery. I asked them about the characters, what they were like and how they felt and thought.

When the two stories and the resultant circular illustrations were completed we hung the pictures on the wall. The students took turns telling the story to the other group.

I had intended at this point to have them choose one of these stories for their opera. As it turned out, the two stories had enough similarity of setting and characters that it seemed they could easily be combined into one story. The fifth meeting concentrated on combining the two original stories into one. I led the discussion and directed them in this task, using their stories as the material.

Mus: In this story the main characters are the horse, the dog, and the cat. They went out looking for friends...

G-5: You forgot the cow.

Mus: That's one of the friends...so they could get enough together to play kickball. That was their problem. Now this one (story) has at least one similar character. There are a mama cow and her two calves. The calves wander off. We don't know why they wander off.

Z-4: to go play kickball.

Mus: That's what I was thinking. They could run into the horse, dog, and cat. Combining your stories, as they go they meet up with these characters until finally they come back and play the game of kickball (gesturing at their diagrams). Mama can find them. Now, C-3, in your group how did you start?

C-3: That we had the cow and she lost her babies. She went to look for them.

Mus: There's the cow and two babies. Then what was the problem?

C-3: They wandered off.

Mus: They wandered off. She was looking for them. Now, enter your story (to the other group). Who's wandering over here looking for somebody to play kickball?

G-5: The horse, dog, and cat.

Mus: Here's the horse, dog, and cat. Whom do they meet?

Z-4: The two calves.

Mus: That's exactly what I was thinking.
Z-4: Then we can use this story.

At this point we did combine the stories and I outlined the final story with a circular diagram and very sketchy pictures. I asked the students to work independently in their opera workbooks. They could record our story in words and/or pictures. The classroom teacher assisted them in this task.

While the children worked in one room, I set up an interviewing station in the other room, with a note pad and a tape recorder. The purpose of the interviews was to get to know each student better and to find out what understanding of opera they had. The students were told that I would ask them questions, but they were to feel free to ask me questions, too. The questions I asked, sometimes with slight variations and detours, were (a) how old are you, (b) in what grade are you, (c) what do you know about opera, (d) did you know that before or have you learned that since we've been working, (e) have you ever seen an opera, (f) have you ever seen a movie with a lot of music in it, (g) is there anything that you'd like to ask me about our opera, and (h) is there anything else you want to say.

Opera Creation

Now that we had our story, I hoped to get the students accustomed to the idea of an opera, complete with singing actors and actresses. During our sixth meeting I used a familiar folk story to do this. First I told the story of

"The Three Little Pigs." I used a stuffed pig as a prop during the storytelling. Some parts of the story I sang instead of spoke. The students listened and sometimes joined in.

T-K: One more pig!
Several: I know what happens.

At the conclusion some children offered variations of the story. I briefly discussed how folk stories get passed around and changed; thus different versions develop.

I suggested that we act out the story, but instead of saying the words we would sing them, as in an opera. The students eagerly said what parts they wanted. One of the students served as a self-appointed director, while I helped with singing suggestions and a sort of narration. Certainly not a polished improvisatory performance, it did illustrate the role of singing in an opera. Students appeared to have difficulty thinking of dialogue and the production was not very free-flowing.

The time had come to begin work on our own opera. Two of the students read the versions of our story which they had written in their notebooks.

Mus: What do we need if we're going to put on an opera?

Z-4: Story.

C-3: We need characters.

Z-4: We got 10 characters, just how many we need.

Mus: So we have our story worked out. If we want to make it into an opera, what do we do with it next?

C-3: Sing.

Z-4: We need to sing it and stuff and play--play it out, act it.

J-3: Probably put a little scenery...color... butcher paper.

Z-4: For the squirrel, we can make a big tree. We can put like a hole right there.

C-3: ...a hole in it and somebody can talk right off of that.

Mus: What about the characters? What will they need?

J-3: Their suits.

Mus: For our performance, when we put it on for somebody, is there anything else we need? How will they know about it?

C-3: We'll tell them about it.

Z-4: We could put our stories out there. Yeah, we could put our stories out.

C-3: We could write a note.

Mus: That's called publicity, when you let people know about it.

By this discussion method we determined the things that we would need: a story, dramatization, music, scenery, costumes, and publicity. One important factor was still necessary:

Mus: Every major opera company has a name. In New York it is the Metropolitan Opera Company. In Europe there is La Scala. We'll need to choose a name.

ID?: The Four Oaks Opera

ID?: That's what I said.

ID?: He took mine.

Although the response indicated there was no need, we voted and all were in favor of The Four Oaks Opera.

The next step was to compose songs for the opera. I suggested that we start with the scene in which a horse, a dog, and a cat are looking for someone to play kickball. I reminded them that we could have the words rhyme if they wanted to, although it was not necessary that they do so. We worked with words first. I did not specifically suggest just working with words, because in a prior original opera experience the children had created words and melody

simultaneously. Most suggestions this time were just spoken, although some suggestions were offered in a sing-song voice and some were actually sung on pitches. With repetitions the pitches that formed the final version did emerge.

Mus: What might the horse or the dog or the cat sing?

Z-4: Let's go look for someone to play kickball with us.

Mus: Let's all sing that.

As we sang it I wrote it down.

Mus: Now is there a line that would make sense that would rhyme with us?

Z-4: Not that I can think of.

C-3: (sings) Someone to play kickball with us.

Z-4: Us, bus, Gus, Russ.

We repeated it several times, humming, saying, and singing it on the now-developing Do La Sol tonal pattern.

Z-4: I know. (sings) I wonder where we'll look.

T-K: Where we went.

C-3: Oh, I had a good idea - could have...

Z-4: In a barn (sung on one note). In a barn; I don't know.

We all sang it again up to this point.

Z-4: In a barn, in a pasture, in a field (sung).

Mus: You sang three things and we have a horse, a dog, and a cat, so each one could sing one of the suggestions.

C-3: In an orchard.

Z-4: We should have a goat in the orchard. Oh, I know, like this: There is two calves. I wonder if they'll play with us (sung).

Mus: Would it be is two calves? Or are two calves? There are two.

Someone sang "In a barn" on the notes La La Sol. We repeated the song a few more times, getting the tune and words more solidified until it was in its final form. As I announced that we had our first song, the students applauded.

During our next meeting we practiced the composed song. Our song practice usually used this progression. I sang it. We sang it several times in its entirety. We then broke it down into phrases, with the students echoing my singing on each phrase. We then sang the whole song again. Sometimes individual students asked to sing it alone.

At this point I introduced notation of the composed song.

Mus: Music doesn't have to be written. We sing a lot of music and hear a lot of music that doesn't have to be written. But it's handy because it helps us remember it and we can share it with other people.

We looked at note heads. Two students told me they learned that before with another teacher two years ago when they played tonettes. We looked at the melodic contour shown by note placement. We sang our song as I pointed to the notation.

Several times during the process of creating and performing the opera I asked the students to consider the characters. I wanted them to develop the characters beyond a superficial level and to consider what the characters were really like, how they thought, what they felt.

Mus: Think about the horse. What kind of a horse do you think he is?

P-4: Black. Black and brown.

Mus: What kind of personality does he have?

Z-4: He's a quarter horse.

J-K: Quarter horses are brown.

Mus: For our story, what's his personality like?

Z-4: Funny.

C-3: I think he laughs.

Z-4: The cat, he has a bad sense of humor and he never laughs. Yeah, he's a happy cat; he just never laughs.

P-4: He catches mice. He doesn't have a sense of humor because the mice make fun of him.

We continued talking about the personalities of the characters, in some cases comparing them to real-life animals and perhaps drawing from some human experiences.

C-3: How 'bout a barn cat. That's what we have. He's always groggy in the house 'cuz they just be around, but in the barn they have to ...

P-4: In a different country maybe cats and mice would be friends.

Mus: So these three, the horse, the dog, and the cat, what kind of mood are they in?

Z-4: Kind of grouchy.

C-3: Yeah, they are kind of.

Mus: Do you think they might be afraid to ask the calves, afraid they'll say no?

J-K: I think they'll say yes.

Mus: See, we'll have to let the audience know all this about the characters. We can't just tell them either. We have to show them. How can we show the audience?

C-3: They can put on costumes and they can joke around.

J-K: We could like have the horse tell jokes.

After some more discussion about character portrayal, we turned our attention to two different kinds of singing that the characters do. I explained that arias are songs that an actor or actress sings with the action more-or-less stopped. I explained that if a group sings a song we call it a chorus. I then described another kind of singing, recitative, which is a musical conversation with oneself or with others. Our opera would contain arias, choruses, and recitative.

The song we composed during the seventh meeting was the opening song. In it, the cow and two calves sang first. Then, as they became separated, the two calves sang a conversation. Finally the mother cow, realizing she had lost

her babies, sang an aria. We began by discussing the characters and their situation. As we discussed it, the three parts became apparent and were reflected in our song. The actual composing took on a now-familiar form. The students suggested a line, often spoken at first and becoming a sung line with repetitions. I repeated the new line along with previous ones. They added to or altered the words and melody as we repeated each segment.

For the eighth meeting, I directed the students to compose in two smaller groups, each group responsible for one song. We reviewed the two scenarios. Then each group went to a different room, armed with note books and tape recorders.

I worked with one group first. They followed a format similar to what we had used in previous large-group composing. They would try a line, repeat it, add to it. Sometimes it was spoken, but other times it was chanted in a sing-song voice or combined with simple melodic contour.

Z-4: Let's go see if we can find some more people to play with us.

G-5: Put more melody with it. We'll sing it and it will sound better.

Often I had to encourage them to sing it, not just say it.

This group grasped the idea of dialogue for the characters, evidenced by their suggested lyrics. The other group, observed by an assistant, had trouble switching from writing a narrative, story-like form to writing conversational dialogue.

P-4: O.K. Shall we say once upon a time there was a horse, dog, cat, and donkey and goat and two calves walking along and they got thirsty. That could be our first sentence couldn't it?

C-3: They saw a squirrel. They asked the squirrel if he wanted to play.

Vis: Which characters are singing the song?

C-3: The horse, the dog, cat, donkey and goat.

Vis: So are they going to sing "They"?

The visiting assistant kept asking leading questions, but the writing was still in narrative and not dialogue.

P-4: We can squeeze in say...

Vis: Pretend you're the characters. You're going to be on stage. Pretend you're those people. Do you understand what I'm saying?

P-4: I was thinking, um, squeeze in someone saying, I'm thirsty.

Vis: Yes, maybe have the horse or the dog. But they're going to sing a song together, so what can they say? Use your idea here, but now say it the way your characters would say it.

The visitor then suggested a different tactic.

Vis: Let's try this. We have the horse, dog, cat, donkey, goat. One of you be the horse.

P-4: O.K., I'll be the horse I guess.

Vis: One of you be the dog.

P-4: You be the dog.

Vis: And you're walking along and you're thirsty. Let's sing something. What would they sing?

C-3: They'd sing, "I'm thirsty" and then they'd sing, "How 'bout you?" "I am, too." (sung in a sing-song voice, but without exact melody)

Vis: So what are you going to sing?

C-3: I'm thirsty.

P-4: I'm thirsty, said one of the calves.

Vis: But you don't need to say said one of the calves because the person will be dressed up in a calf's costume and the audience will know who it is.

P-4: One of the animals.

C-3: Just don't write one of the animals. Just say, "I'm thirsty."

P-4: I'm thirsty, too.

Vis: Sing that to each other now.

P-4: I'm thirsty.

C-3: I'm thirsty, too.

P-4: Huh, makes sense.

Even with this breakthrough, the problem was not immediately solved. There were lapses back away from dialogue, but the song did get composed and ready to sing. The two groups were reunited and shared their songs with each other.

I returned for our ninth meeting after a one-week hiatus. I brought with me the large sheets of paper with notation, color coded to match a bell set and their tonettes. We read the words, followed the melodic contour by pointing to and connecting the note heads, and sang the songs. Earlier the children had demonstrated their tonette skills and I realized that they did not really play. Their notes were inaccurate; their rhythms were inaccurate; their tone was breathy and harsh. Color coding the music would allow for individual practice, but our time frame and the wide spread age of the students did not lend itself to formal tonette instruction. Two of the students, a third grader and a fourth grader, did learn the songs independently and played them as the overture, both on tonettes and on the piano. They played with inexact rhythms and breathy tone color, but with correct notes.

During this meeting I introduced some alternate composing techniques. We first encountered the Cow's aria, a song to which we already had the lyrics. I brought a glockenspiel with me, arranged in a pentatonic scale made up of C D F G A C D. I played the scale several times and the children took turns playing. Next we read the words together. We discussed how the Cow would feel. We said the first line of lyrics. We

said it again while our hands clapped the rhythm patterns of the words. I called attention to each syllable, each "bump." Then they played suggestions for the phrase on the glockenspiel. Once a suggestion met with everyone's approval, we sang it several times and went on to the next phrase. Phrase by phrase we built the aria. I notated it as we repeated it.

Up to this time the children had not used rhymes in their songs. I had mentioned rhymes and poetry as an option but they did not choose to rhyme. For the final song of the opera, I determined that we would use rhymes.

Mus: When people write poetry--and words to songs are often just a kind of poetry--they sometimes use rhyming words.

I explained that rhyming words can happen at different places. Sensing inexperience with writing and analysis of rhyme in poetry, I chose to examine couplets. I showed them samples, emphasizing that the couplets are just one way of rhyming.

Mus: Let's think now, the main point of the song is that we're going to play kickball and everybody's here. Right? Let's think of an important word. What might be the most important word in this poem if it's about playing kickball?

Z-4: Kickball.

F-K: Kickball.

Mus: Now think of some words that rhyme with ball.

They offered several suggestions, which I wrote on the board.

Mus: Let's make up two lines of poetry that end in two of these words. Blah.....ball; Blah.....all.

J-2: Football.

C-3: I like to play kickball.

I repeated it and wrote it on the board. They read it.

Mus: Is there a line that would go with this that would end in one of these other words?

C-3:in the hall.

Mus: ___ said a good one. But does it make sense? Our animals are all outside in the pasture.

The process which continued involved my questions, their responses, and repetitions of previous lines. We altered them to fit lengthwise. When we had four lines of poetry, two couplets, we decided it was enough. I suggested that we could repeat part or all of it if we wanted to.

I chose to give a little more structure and direction for the melodic composing this time. I used the bells and played a very strong Do Mi So Mi Do chord. I kept playing these tonic chord tones as the students gave suggestions of melodies for the lines. I also played their suggestions on the bells. I sometimes edited slightly if they were close to the notes in their suggestions. When the suggested ending fell on the typical Mi Re Do notes, it sounded finished and tonal.

Rehearsal Phase

To enable the students to practice independently, I left practice tapes and notation. One tape had all of the songs recorded. I also made tapes for each family, containing the songs of the characters played by the family members. In addition to the large notated songs, I made individual booklets for each child.

During the tenth meeting we discussed costumes.

Z-4: Are we going to put heads on or are we just going to act like it?

I suggested several possibilities, including hats, heads, full costumes, cardboard cutouts, and masks. One student suggested puppets. Another suggested bringing in live animals. The classroom teacher offered to be in charge of costumes with assistance from parents and from the students. There was much measuring, trying on, gathering, and constructing throughout the next two weeks.

Ideas on scenery and sets also started taking shape.

G-5: We could have like a picture of a barn and a field. Up on the hills we could have a coyote.

Z-4: Hey, you know those big white rolls of paper. We could have one over there and one over there and roll the paper.

An important step was to choose the cast. I had been listening to the children as they sang during our practice sessions and during the composition stage. At this time I informally auditioned them by having them sing echoes individually for me. We had done this earlier in the project, too. I cast one child in two roles, because I knew that the fifth grader was transferring to a different school. I chose a boy to be the cow. At first he said he was not bothered by the gender difference, but later confided that he did not like being a cow. So, we changed the cow to a bull.

During the eleventh meeting we had our first walk through of the opera. We staged each scene in a preliminary way. Both the students and I made suggestions, but I served as

director. During this rehearsal we added some improvised "filler" lines (sung). The students were encouraged to do more of this improvisation, but mostly sang the composed music.

We practiced the group songs, and also some of the solo and trio songs. We sang them in whole and phrase by phrase. We practiced singing in our upper registers and singing accurate pitches.

The next four meetings were used for rehearsals. Sometimes we practiced the whole opera, working on the songs, the actions, and the movement. Sometimes I worked with individual singers, working on melodic contour, range, pitch, enunciation, and singing with voice projection. We added some choreography to the last scene. The final song was repeated with a circle dance, devised by me. It was then repeated once more as the grand finale. Two children worked on welcome and introduction speeches. The "orchestra" of tonette and piano worked on the overture. I furnished sketchy accompaniment for the songs on the piano, with filler music in between. I emphasized the vocabulary of opera: cast, overture, choreography, libretto, orchestra, aria, recitative, chorus, stage, audience, costumes, sets, scenery. While I was gone, the students, with help from the classroom teacher, painted the scenery. We filled out measurement cards for everyone to assist in finding costumes that would fit. They made programs and posters on their computers. They were also busy with

word-of-mouth publicity. We offered evaluation of all phases of the production by self, peers, and me.

C-3: We need to work on our play and our singing.

Z-4: We need to work on the kindergartners getting to their places and quit messing around.

J-3: Me and J-2 need to get better at our parts.

Z-4: Yeah, you guys need to sing a little louder.

My observation suggested that the students' performance portrayed plot episodes well, but did not seem to project the characters' personalities or feelings. I conducted another session during which I asked them about their characters, interviewed the characters, and encouraged other students to ask questions of the characters. I asked them to name their characters.

Mus: I want to know what you would name your characters.

Z-4: Charolais.

Mus: That's what kind it is, but would that be his name, too?

Z-4: We don't name cows so I wouldn't know.

Mus: Normally some people name cows and some don't. But right now, your assignment was that you were supposed to think of your character. This isn't an ordinary cow up here. Ordinary cows don't put on plays, don't put on operas, and don't sing.

C-3: Fluffy.

Mus: C-3 is Fluffy, the Donkey.

C-3: No, I'd rather have Joe.

I asked questions of the characters.

Mus: I'm going to talk with Lightening Bolts, a very famous horse. Lightening Bolts, would you tell us a little bit about yourself, please?

P-4: O.K. I race. I race to my food and water.

Mus: What foods do you like, Lightening Bolts?

P-4: Grain, eggs, peaches. I climb trees.

Z-4: How do you eat the eggs?

P-4: I use a fork.

Z-4: How do you get the eggs?

P-4: Well, my mother makes them for me.

N-K: How do you get your grain?

I encouraged conversations about the feelings of the characters.

Mus: Pickley and Big Brute, when you discovered that your dad was gone, how did you feel?

J-3: We felt bad.

Mus: Were you a little bit frightened?

J-3: No.

J-2: Kind of.

Mus: Now I know that you said, "Oh no, where's Dad?" Were you afraid that you had lost him for good?

J-2: Yes, if he was dead.

I suggested that from now on when they acted in the opera they would not be the boys and girl from their school. They would be the characters themselves. I encouraged them to add little things through improvisation, in order to let the audience know them.

The sixteenth meeting included rehearsals and the dress rehearsal. During a discussion session I encouraged the students to relate the characters and plot to their own lives.

Mus: Have you ever had an experience in which suddenly you haven't seen your mom or dad and you've been a little scared?

N-K: I do.

Z-4: At the carnival--they went down and watched wrestling and they didn't tell me. I didn't know where they were.

P-4: Whenever I think I was four, I got lost in a big mall. I started looking around and stopped somebody and told them they left me. Before they left I didn't hear anything like, "Come on."

J-K: Well, when I was scared, sometimes they take (older brother) to the bus. I stay home by myself.

Mus: Did you hope Dad would hurry or were you glad to be alone?

J-K: Kind a like a mouse.

N-K: Once when my mom was at the bus stop to pick up (older sister,) and cartoons were on, I felt scared. She always jabbars with my grandma. Then I called her on the radio.

Several anecdotes reflected the students' rural way of life.

Mus: When your characters go off looking for other players for a game, does that make sense? Living in the country, have you ever been in the same position?

Z-4: No, well, yeah, but you never get enough.

J-3: I was trying to look for a couple of kids to play baseball and I did find them, all my brothers.

Performance and Post-performance Phase

On the night of the performance the school was clean and decorated. The students' pictures, along with their names and characters, were posted on a marquee. The cookies the children baked at school, along with goodies from home, were laid out for the post-opera cast and audience party. Parents, siblings, relatives, friends, and school district officials gathered to form a supportive, enthusiastic audience of approximately thirty-five people.

Before the performance I introduced myself, introduced the cast, and told a brief synopsis of the opera. The make-shift spot lights, procured by the classroom teacher, went on. The house lights went down. The two greeters welcomed the audience. The two-member tonette and piano orchestra played the overture. The opera unfolded and ended with enthusiastic applause about 18 minutes later. The cast members bowed. Before we all launched into the party, I thanked the audience. I also told them briefly about my research and asked them to fill out a questionnaire about the experience.

There were two post-opera meetings. Approximately a month after the student performance, I visited and directed some follow-up activities with the children. I read to them Madame Nightingale Will Sing Tonight (Mayhew, 1991), a book about a group of forest animals who produced an original opera. I would have used the book at the beginning of the project had I known about it then, but it also served as a closure to our experience.

We watched the Metropolitan Opera production of Hansel and Gretel (Humperdinck, 1982) on video tape. I progressed the film at fast speed through some sections of the opera, but on two occasions they had me back up and slow it to watching speed. The children listened intently, although they had trouble understanding the words at times. They seemed to enjoy it and especially loved the witch character.

Two months later I visited once more. This time we watched the video of Amahl and the Night Visitors (Menotti, 1978). These productions were enjoyable to the students. They not only watched intently but also were able to use and understand appropriate vocabulary during the subsequent discussions. They talked about the orchestra and the overture. They became very involved in the plot and made suggestions as to what would occur next and how a character would feel. They compared the two operas and discussed which parts they liked best. Their discussions indicated that they were better able to receive the impression from the operas

since they had practiced the skills of expression via the same medium. Their perceptions had been alerted to the elements of the opera form.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF PROJECT DATA

As I examined the research data, two major themes or categories emerged: integration of subject areas and relevance to the children's lives. This chapter presents evidence of those two themes. Data will include narrative description, excerpted dialogue, and excerpts from interviews, questionnaires, and written student work.

In the division which focuses on integration of subject areas, I will describe specific episodes or sections of the project. I will also summarize what subject areas were integrated and the source of the integration. Some integration occurred because of the definition of opera itself; opera of necessity would contain music, drama, visual arts, and movement. Other instances of integration were part of the project design; I included integrative features when I developed the plans for the project. Still other examples of integration were found that resulted from input by the personnel involved: classroom teacher, music teacher (me), the students, and the community.

In verbatim dialogue, the students are identified by initial and grade level. Acting in the role of music teacher, I am identified as Mus. The classroom teacher is identified

as MSH. A visiting music graduate is identified as Vis. When certain identity of a speaker cannot be determined, he or she is referred to as ID?. The conversations and comments, both verbal and written, are transcribed verbatim. No attempt has been made to correct spelling, grammar, or language conventions of any kind.

Evidence of Integration

Circle Story Form

Investigating the Circle Story. This event focused primarily on language arts and visual arts. I followed the suggestions of Mary Jett-Simpson (1981) for this lesson. I introduced the circle story form, in which the characters begin and end at a home-like setting. In the intervening episodes they have several adventures which aid in solving the problem of the story. I used a large circle, divided into pie-like segments for each episode, to illustrate the form. The children listened as I read the story, Millions of Cats (Gag, 1928), and looked at the book's illustrations. I then guided them in discussion: Who were the main characters? Where did the story begin and end? What was the problem? What adventures happened and in what order?

I divided the children into three groups, with each group having at least one older student and at least one kindergarten student. I instructed each group to review the story and decide how many episodes occurred. They then drew

a large circle, dividing it into enough segments to accommodate the beginning and end setting and each episode. They drew a little house to indicate the beginning/ ending segment.

The next step was to illustrate each episode. They used pencils and markers on large sheets of newsprint. They discussed what colors to use, what to draw/color, and how to draw/color.

C-3: Can you make a stick man?

J-K: I don't know how to draw a man. I know how to draw the feet.

Z-4: Pretty funny, huh? Hey mine look like turtles. I'm a good turtle drawer.

P-4: Ninja turtles. O.K....Oh those must be the ninja turtles because they can talk. Have you seen Chip and Dale's Adventure?

Z-4: The cats are after the water. Eeeeow (descending vocal sound).

J-K: (from the other group) They all look like ants.

P-4: Nice job. We need to color this brown.

They used simple geometry in the drawing of the circle and the line segments.

C-3: Who wants to make the circle? I'm going to make the house and then you guys can make the pie. O.K.? Now draw a line from there to there.

Mathematics again surfaced in the counting of the cats and numbering the segments.

N-K: Twenty-nine cats.

P-4: We have nine, ten--wow we have more than ten.

Z-4: We have thirty-three cats.

There was a little integration of science.

J-K: What you guys making?

Z-4: Long tailed cats, too. And Manx (as he drew a tail-less cat).

The technique of writing dialogue in the cartoon style of ballooning was used in one instance.

P-4: Here, if you want to you can even do like they do in cartoons. That comes out of their mouth. You can go like this. I'm not really drawing it but see how it looks. It gives a person.....then there's words in the bubble.

When the students were finished with their illustrations they wrote their names on them. The kindergartners received some help from the older children.

C-3: Jake, come write your name. Frank, write your name down here.

The illustrations were hung on the wall and photographed. The students took turns looking at the illustrations and telling the story.

The design of the project directed much of the integration that occurred. The counting, bubble dialogue, Manx cat information, prolific verbal communication, and name writing originated with the students. Language arts, visual art, mathematics, and science were integrated.

Creating a Class Circle Story. During the first circle story creation activity, the entire group worked together. They decided on a setting.

Mus: Where could we have our story start?

Z-4: House.

C-3: Barn.

G-5: In a movie theater, on a stage.

The decision was made by a vote. They decided on the characters, with an initial character and others added as the story progressed. The problem was decided upon.

Z-4: No, a horse, because he doesn't have a friend. He wants to find a friend.

The students decided on a sequence of events until finally a solution to the problem was found and the animals returned to the home setting. After the story was formulated the students recorded it in their opera notebooks, using words and/or pictures.

The animal characters--horse, cow, sheep, goat, chickens, antelope--were very much from the children's own setting, as were the barn, grain bin, farm yard, water tank, and woods setting. This reflects social studies at the personal and communal level. The problem itself, the character's wanting a friend, is one common in human relations. The voting process, popular for decisions among the students, comes from social studies also. Science was brought into their discussion when they decided a coyote was a proper character, but that at this time, being there were no wolves in the area, a wolf would be improper. Life science was in evidence when one of the students told about an old sheep.

J-3: Well, we had a sheep. He was old and he was kind of lame. ...gave him to me. We didn't shear him for like four years and we finally sheared him. He had a bunch of wool. But he got stuff from the cowtrail and died.

While the students were recording their stories in their notebooks, there were many questions of spelling. They asked their classroom teacher and each other.

Z-4: How do you spell opera?

The act of writing was important to them.

J-K: Look how fat my R is.

Sometimes they expressed concern that they could not draw things exactly as they looked.

J-K: How do you even draw a horse?

N-K: How do you draw a horse?

I tried to reassure them that famous artists often do not try to paint and draw exact representations. Photographs could be used for that effect.

In this activity the design of the project directed the language arts and visual arts components. But the children supplied the science and social studies elements.

Creating Circle Stories in Small Groups. The students worked on the next circle story creation activity in two groups. As they collectively decided on the characters, setting, plot, problem, solution, and episodes they illustrated the story on large newsprint, using the circle with pie-shaped wedges paradigm. Language arts and visual arts dominated the learning experience, but there was evidence of other subject areas, also. Much of the experience practiced the same skills and knowledge that prior circle story creations did. There were some new directions, however. Some figurative and metaphoric language was used.

G-5: That's a big cow. That's a Cadillac cow.

In the other group, meanwhile, the cow took on a different look.

J-3: Yah, it looks like a crocodile cow.

While drawing the circle they conversed.

C-3: Who wants to draw the circle"

ID?: I do.

C-3: We want a perfect circle, not just...It looks like a lovely heart.

J-3: It looks like a big Easter egg or something.

C-3: Well, no one's perfect.

A kindergarten child personalized the characters by naming them.

J-K: A horse, Big John, and a dog and a cat.
That's Tiger and that's Brownie.

One group expressed concern about the short length of their story. They were comparing their story with aspects of stories that they had known in former experience.

P-4: Maybe we'll need more. Let's just draw one more line.

C-3: Just draw it across there.

P-4: Yeah, it won't be much of a story because one minute later it ends.

I challenged them a bit, asking for more than just sequential episodes. I asked what sorts of things would make it interesting.

G-5: Action.

Z-4: Something scary.

Oral language was once again practiced by telling the story, using the illustrations as a guide. In one case it became a cooperative venture.

N-K: They met a dog and then a horse and a cat. And then they met a donkey. And then whatever this is. And then the cow. And then they came over here and meet a donkey.

Z-4: Nope, what is that? It has little horns and it's little. A goat, remember?

N-K: A goat. And then they get a drink and they meet a squirrel.
 Z-4: The squirrel stays, doesn't he?
 N-K: Yeah.
 Z-4: He never left his tree.
 N-K: And then the cat, riding the cow...
 Z-4: It's a horse.
 N-K: Riding a horse. And then they played kickball. I like the squirrel.

Developing the plot also was a cooperative effort.

P-4: This one's the tree. The cow's up the tree.
 C-3: Yeah.
 P-4: How 'bout the mama cow? Oh this is the tree one. How 'bout the mama cow catches and then she hears...
 J-3: She finds her little baby stuck.
 P-4: Oh, she finds one of her babies stuffed.
 J-3: The baby's stuck in a trap.
 C-3: Not a trap. Draw the ground. Let's draw a tree with her baby behind it. She can only see its head, his head.
 P-4: Oh, I thought she wasn't supposed to know.
 C-3: Oh, she's not, but she can't see his head. It's only peeking out a little. Then he says, "Moo" on the other picture.

Writing their names on the finished product seemed very important to them. They discussed where and how to write them. Writing conventions were also addressed with a question about punctuation marks.

C-3: Keep on drawing exclamation marks, O.K.? Here.
 P-4: How 'bout this: The cow...an exclamation or a question mark? It's like she says, "Moo?"

The conversation bubble of cartooning was used by one group, combining an art strategy with a language strategy. Dialogue was used in the actual illustration of that group and also within the group's conversation during the work.

P-4: Then the cow says, "have you seen my babies?" And then the wolf says, "Why, yes, they're in my

stomach right now. They're in my stomach right now and they're tickling me."

Science was integrated in one instance through a discussion about snakes.

N-K: A rattlesnake bit them. A blue racer...
 Z-5: It's a red racer, O.K.?
 N-K: It's a blue racer.
 Z-5: It's red now. (spoken as he colored it red)

At one point a dinosaur, pterodactyl to be exact, was a character. Environmental science was also present in a discussion about predators of calves.

N-K: A coyote.
 J-K: A wolf. A mountain lion. They're going to put wolves.
 Z-4: They're going to put them around here.

Knowledge of science with respect to agricultural use and natural land/water forms surfaced when the group placed the squirrel not by a pond, but by a dam, a common man-made pond in arid ranch land.

In the illustrations, the children chose very vivid and, in some cases, unrealistic colors.

N-K: I'll color it blue.
 Z-4: It's a blue, black dog?
 J-K: I want to color a kitty, Mister. I want to color it blue.
 Z-4: Be red. Make him small. He's red. What is he, a paint?
 J-K: What a blackie--a little white spot...

The plot of one of the stories addressed physical education and movement. The animals were going to play kickball.

Z-4: (as he draws) There's a base; there's a base; there's a base; there's a base. I'm not playing kickball.

G-5: I'm pitching.

Z-K: A squirrel can't play kickball; he'd get squished by the ball.

Music, too, was present. One illustrator hummed almost the entire time that he was drawing and coloring.

The design of the project dictated that there would be language arts and visual art. The children themselves added other integrative segments: figurative language, science aspects, physical education and movement, concern with punctuation, use of dialogue, use of humor, and music. In addition, one of the children drew a parallel between their characters and plot and that of a movie, another integrative form.

Creating the Circle Story Opera Text. The students created their final circle story, the one which they subsequently set to music for the opera, by the process of combining their two small-group stories. They had to analyze the two stories, find similarities in plot and characters, re-draft their stories, and re-write to accommodate both stories. They were still very much concerned with the parts of the story--characters, plot, setting, problem, solution, episodes--but they went further in editing.

Once the story had been decided upon by the group, I suggested that they put it in their opera notebooks. The students could use words and/or pictures, accommodating their interest and level of communication skills. During this time they asked for and received feedback from each other and from

the classroom teacher. Their concern with spelling was reflected in their many questions of each other and their teacher. Sometimes they were just spelling aloud as they wrote.

- Z-4: Mrs. H, How do you spell wandered?
 J-2: Upon a time.
 MsH: Up, how do you spell up? On? Upon a time.
 P-4: H-o-r-s...
 Z-4: S-q-u-i-r-r-e-l
 MsH: d-o-g
 J-2: Oh good, I spelled it right.

Punctuation was a concern for the older students.

- Z-4: Do you see anywhere I should put periods?
 MsH: No, I didn't.
 C-3: I've just been putting periods every once in a while.
 Z-4: Every once in a while?
 C-3: Well, whenever I think of it I put periods.
 P-4: You need a period.
 C-3: See, I don't have a period in here except right here.

Writing the names was once again important to them.

- P-4: I'll write my name on it.
 ID?: That's my name. I spelled my name backwards.

The students also asked each other for reminders of the order of episodes, the plot.

- C-3: Where did she find her calves?
 Z-4: At the end when they played football.

Two of the students read their stories aloud when they had finished writing them.

There was interaction among students and between students and the classroom teacher regarding their drawing and coloring the illustrations of the story.

- J-2: There's a spot right there on his head.
 MsH: Was there some animal with him?

J-2: A cat.

Some of the interactions involved the artwork, the language, and other additions such as humor.

C-3: Look at my squirrel, running up the tree.

Mus: Is that what he did when he said he didn't want to play?

C-3: That's what Grandma's do 'cause she has lots of close trees. Do they train as acrobats?

Mus: You mean for the circus?

C-3: Go to the circus and say they told them to do that.

Once again the project design dictated language arts and visual arts integration. The children and the classroom teacher integrated conventions of writing through their concern with spelling and punctuation.

Written Communications

Letter Writing. Writing letters was part of our project in two different contexts. One example was the suggestion by one of the students that we could write to people to let them know about our opera performance. Although letter writing per se was not an element of the design of the project or of the opera form itself, its function as publicity is certainly an inherent aspect of opera.

The second letter writing activity found its source in a classroom teacher. Previously I had worked with another group of students and their teacher at a one-room rural school, creating and producing an original student opera. That classroom teacher, upon hearing about the Four Oaks project, suggested that her students would like to become penpals with

the Four Oaks Students. They had much in common: they were rural, ranch children; they attended a one-room school; they had opera experience. I presented the suggestion to the students and they enthusiastically endorsed it.

The students have written and received letters. Their letters told about themselves and their families and asked questions along the same lines.

- J-2: I am the only one in second grade.
 J-3: I have for brothers at home.
 P-4: Do you ride a bus? I ride a bus to school?
 C-3: My birthday is in June.
 Z-4: I have a brother he is in kindergarten.

Their rural ranch life was a common topic.

- C-3: Our family has lots of cows. We have 5 horses all together...Do you live on a ranch?
 J-2: We raise pigs. My job is to feed the dogs.
 Z-4: I live on a ranch.
 J-3: My dad is a logger. I have hunters. They got ten bucks.

Many of their statements and questions were about animals and pets, both at home and at school.

- P-4: We have four dogs one of them died. There names are Jackle, Scotty, Rolin and Sobs. Do you have pets! Do you have pets at school.
 J-2: Our family has three dogs.
 C-3: I have a goldfish. I have a bunny his name is Long Ears...Do you have pets at school? We have water dogs at school. We feed the water dogs worms.
 Z-4: I have one horse his name is Tiger. I have a dog, cat, eight cows and a bull.

They wrote about school and outside interests.

- Z-4: I team rope....I want to be a linebacker. My favorite sport is football and basketball. My favorite computer games are Super Munchers, Putt-Putt, Kid Pix and Number Munchers.
 C-3: Do you have a computer at school?... What games do you like to play at p.e.

J-2: I like to play computer.

J-3: Do you have a computer. What games do you play?

P-4: Do you have parties at school? Do you watch movies at school.

They even wrote about their opera.

Z-4: We are making a opera it is called The Kickball Game. I am the bull and snake.

C-3: Our opera is called "The Kick Ball Game"...I am going to be a donkey in our opera.

These letters certainly were exercises in language arts and written communication. It also appeared that the students were very concerned with letter form, spelling, and punctuation. But beyond that, the students integrated much about school and life, a little science, technology, music, physical education, and social studies.

Newsletters. The students wrote and produced a newsletter on their computer. Two issues were sent home and to friends during our project time.

Special Music Teacher: Susan Hove-Pabst, a music teacher from BHSU, is our special music teacher. We do lots of fun things. We are learning to write some neat stories. We are going to choose one of the stories and make it into an opera. Sometimes we play fun games too.

by P-4

A later issue of the newsletter contained this article.

Opera: On November 12, 1993 presented Our Opera at the Four Oaks School. About 35 guests came to see it. First we had the overture. Z-4 and C-3 played the piano and the tonettes. Then we started the play. The name of the opera was "The Kickball Game." Z-4 was the bull and snake, P-4 was a horse, J-3 was a calf, C-3 was a donkey, J-2 was a calf, J-K was a dog, N-K was a squirrel, T-K was a goat, and F-K was a cat. We all wore costumes. We made the background out of paper. After we

presented our opera, we served refreshments of cookies, lemonade, and coffee. Everyone had a good time.

By C-3

These newsletters provided language arts experience in writing informative content and in conventions of writing. They also served a social purpose, promoting community cohesiveness. In addition, they afforded the students practice on computers. This included some visual arts/graphics experience, as their newsletters had illustrations.

The newsletters were not a necessary ingredient to the project or to the opera form, although they did represent publicity, certainly a part of opera. The students and their classroom teacher initiated the integration of language arts, visual arts, and computer literacy in this component.

Programs and Posters. The students designed written programs for the performance night. They used the computer to create pictures and to print pertinent information, including the complete libretto. In addition the students designed informative posters to display in three locations. These were also created with the computer and contained informational text and illustrations.

The form of opera itself suggested the need for publicity and programs. The students, however, incorporated the use of computers.

Opera Notebooks. The opera notebooks were intended to serve as a place to record thoughts, questions, and assignments. As I expected, there was significant difference in the use by the kindergarten students and by the older students.

The kindergarten students used the notebooks to print their names, practice numbers, and practice letters. They also practiced drawing and coloring various combinations of geometric figures (including the circle), lines (including line segments dividing circles into segments), and pictures. The pictures represented the characters and the episodes of the stories.

A second grader combined pictures of the characters with word phrases outlining the plot. He did not use the segmented pie geometric shape, but a linear, left-to-right and top to bottom format.

Older students wrote their final versions of the stories in their notebooks. One of them also included an illustrated pie-shaped version.

Once apon a time there was a cow who lost her calfs. She whent looking for her calves She saw a donkey the donkey said do you whont to play kickball Yes. They walked until they met a goat They asked the goat if he wanted to play he said yes. They walked. until They met a squirrel bye a dam. They aked the squirrel if he whanted to play he said no so they took a drink. a the dam then They walked until they met a snake the snake chased them away. Then they met the caves. Then they play kickball. (C-3)

There was a cow and two calves. The calves wandered off. The horse, dog, cat were looking for somebody to play kick ball. They saw the two calves and asked if they wanted to play kickball. Then they meet a donkey and asked him if he wanted to play. They walked and meet a goat they asked him if he wanted to play with them. Then they went to get a drink of water and they meet a squirrel but he didn't want to play. When they were walking home they saw a snake. The snake chased them all the way home. The calves found there mother and they all played kickball. (Z-4)

The older students also wrote lists of opera words which I had written on the chalkboard and which we had discussed. One student wrote a rough draft of the newsletter article which she had written. Three of them wrote lyrics to songs they were composing.

Language arts and visual arts activities, included in the notebooks as written and visual communication, were the result of the design of the project. The students added their own input, however, in the form of practice of letters and numbers, the newsletter draft, practice of geometric shapes, and lists of books they had read. They also used the notebooks as impetus for conversation among the group as they worked.

Opera Readiness Activities

General Discussions. Throughout the project there were informal discussions about opera. These discussions, along with the actual creation and production of the opera, helped the students to find out about the opera form. They learned about its characteristics and definition (Anderson & Lawrence,

1982; Apel, 1966; Hamm, 1966). They also learned a little about the history (Drummond, 1980).

During the first visit I told them that I would help them to create and produce an opera. I outlined the steps we would do: create a story, make it into a special play called an opera, and perform it. I asked them if they knew what opera was.

C-3: No.

G-5: Italians and Vikings like them. They sing, "Ooooo." I'm Italian.

J-3: Yeah, they sing and have these cardboard things.

During the third visit I asked them if they had any questions about opera. They had some responses.

Z-4: I thought of one but I never wrote it down. Why do they even have opera?

P-4: What are we going to do for the opera?

This gave me a chance to explain the presence of musical dramas in all societies throughout the ages. I talked about the telling of stories through dramatizing, singing, and dancing by early humans.

Z-4: And then they'd draw.

I told them that during the last 300-400 years the songs and stories and dances were put into more formal musical dramas, operas. There have certainly been changes in opera during the intervening years, but the main characteristics have remained the same.

C-3: And art?

Mus: They have art because they paint the sets, the background for the play. They have beautiful

costumes for the play. All of that is art. They make the posters and the programs. And there is make up.

The children seemed to accept the idea of a need to tell a story and to understand that opera is one way of doing so.

Later in our project, after they had created their story, we again discussed opera. I reminded them that we were going to make our story into an opera. I asked them what we would need in order to put on an opera.

Z-4: Story.

C-3: We need characters.

Z-4: We got ten characters, just how many we need.

Mus: So we have our story worked out. If we want to make it into an opera what do we need next?

ID?: Sing.

Z-4: We need to sing it and stuff and play it out, act it.

Mus: So we'll need some actors and actresses?

J-3: Probably put a little scenery.

There was some ensuing discussion about sets and scenery, including a tree that could house a squirrel.

Mus: What about the other characters? What will they need?

J-3: Their suits.

After a brief discussion about an audience I asked them how the audience would know about the characters.

C-3: We'll tell them about it.

Z-4: We could put our stories out there.

C-3: We could write a note.

Z-4: We can type them on the computer.

Mus: Do you have a community newspaper?

MSH: We have our school newspaper; it goes home to parents.

There was a brief discussion about stage hands, costumes, and lights. I brought up the subject of programs, and the libretto which they might contain.

Z-4: We could write our stories out somewhere on the computer or on paper.

One of the students expressed concern about punctuation, specifically the use of periods. I spoke briefly about my writing, and how I often write first for content and then go back to revise and edit.

One more characteristic of opera companies emerged. We needed a name. The forthcoming suggestions were almost identical and the vote was unanimous for Four Oaks Opera.

These discussions emphasized the various components of opera--movement, drama, literature, music, visual art- both from a standpoint of what others did and what we would do. The opera form itself was the source of most of the integration. Some additions came from the children, however. The use of computers is an example.

Folk Story Improvisation. Before the students launched into their opera composition phase of the project, I wanted them to have some improvisatory experience with the opera form itself. I decided to use a story with which they would be familiar. I helped them remember the folk story, "Three Little Pigs, by telling it to them, using a pig as a prop, and singing some parts of the story. They listened intently and got involved.

ID?: One more pig.

J-3: In a big pot of water. I know what happens.

They knew other versions to the story.

Z-4: In one the wolf jumped in and jumped right out.

C-3: When he jumped out all the pigs ran to the brick house.

This gave me an opportunity to discuss oral literature and the variations that occur as a story is passed from person to person, generation to generation. I also related it to folk songs, which get changed as they are passed on.

I then asked the students to act out the story, but instead of saying the words they would sing the words, as in an opera. They were eager to be the characters, and in some cases to be the props.

J-3: I'll be the house or I'm the pot, a singing pot of water.

J-K: Stick pig. Oink. Oink.

There was movement and drama, with some speaking and some singing. I discovered, however, that dialogue was very difficult for them. I assumed the role as singing narrator and that helped them. I often helped them by singing a possible part; they echo sang it. They got very involved in the acting, speaking, and singing when it came to the bargaining for building materials.

J-3: \$1,000 a stick.

C-3: I'll give you \$100.

J-K: May I have some bricks?

Z-4: Yes, you may.

J-3: A million dollars a brick, because I got gold bricks.

Oral literature, drama, dialogue, narrative, singing, opera form, movement, and a little math/business were facets

of this experience. The project itself was the source for most of it, although the children interjected the variation of oral literature and the money parts.

Songs of the Opera: Composing and Learning

The lyrics were the primary concern of the children during the composing process. They concentrated on the story's plot. I constantly interjected the music connection. Language and music were understandably the two main components of the songs, although other subject areas and specific aspects of language were in evidence.

As the students created the lyrics, I would question them about the plot: What is happening now? Who are the characters? Where are they? The students were mostly interested in the meaning of the words; they exhibited little concern for literary devices of any kind. I encouraged them to add more depth to their characters.

Mus: What kind of a horse do you think he is?
 P-4: Black, black and brown.
 Mus: What kind of personality does he have?
 Z-4: He is a quarter horse.
 J-K: Quarter horses are brown.
 Mus: For our story, what's his personality like?
 Z-4: Funny.

This conversation led to a discussion about jokes and humor. After deciding that the cat had no sense of humor the conversation continued, adding perhaps an element of human relations or social studies.

P-4: He catches mice. He doesn't have a sense of humor because the mice make fun of him.

Z-4: The only time he laughs is when he catches them.

P-4: In a different country maybe cats and mice would be friends.

While encouraging drama techniques, I asked the students how we could show the audience about the characters.

C-3: They can put on costumes and they can joke around and then they...

The fifth grader suggested use of a moderator.

C-4: What's a moderator?

G-5: Tells the story.

At this point I interjected that a narrator can tell the story. Thus vocabulary understanding entered into the learning situation.

Conventions of writing became important to the students when they wrote their song lyrics in their notebooks.

Z-4: When you say, "Oh no," you need an exclamation point after "no", don't you?

P-4: Do you have horse spelled h-o-r-s-e?

C-3: Yes.

P-4: O.K., just trying to make sure.

Sometimes the conventions of writing and language skills were emphasized by me.

Mus: That's too, t-o-o, when it's also. (as a third grader wrote the lyrics in her notebook)

I also encountered number agreement between subject and verb.

Z-4: Oh I know, like this: there is two calves. I wonder if they'll play with us.

Mus: Would it be "is two calves" or "are two calves"? There are two.

When students suggested rhyming words we came across the homophones, hall and haul, which I pointed out as sounding the same even though they were spelled differently and had

different meanings. We addressed syllables while we were setting some words to notes. I had the students "say the lyrics with hands" as they clapped each syllable.

I did suggest the option of rhyming several times.

Mus: We can have their song rhyme. It doesn't have to rhyme, but it can.

A later invitation to rhyme met with no acceptance.

Mus: Now is there a line that would make sense and would rhyme with us?

Z-4: Not that I can think of.

The children continued to offer lines that made sense to them, without any concern for rhyme or line length.

C-3: Someone to play kickball with us.

Mus: What words could rhyme with us?

Z-4: Us, bus, Gus, Russ. I know, I wonder where we'll look.

For the last song I decided to impose a poetic style which included rhyme, that of couplets. I explained that words to a song are often just poetry, and that poetry sometimes rhymes. Then I showed samples of couplets. They created a line which expressed the main idea. I asked for rhyming words and guided them to create a second line which ended in one of those rhyming words. We finally constructed four lines, which we repeated to form the song lyrics.

Story form was evident in working conversations.

P-4: We forgot to put, "Once upon a time".

C-4: Maybe he can make up the title.

Science, relevant to their lives, was evident in their discussions during lyric creating. In one instance a

kindergarten student was coloring pictures to go with the song lyrics. He colored the pond red.

C-3: A red pond? Why didn't you make it a blue pond?

J-K: So, red dirt!

He was correct. The soil and rock in that area are often red and reflect in the water, making the reflection red.

Another discussion centered around the many dangers that could face a calf. The suggestions of a coyote, breaking a leg, a wolf, and a snake bite were scientifically logical.

Physical education was central to the problem of the story. The characters wanted to play kickball.

Math was present in counting. Although one of the older students suggested they just count, "1-2-3-4-5... 20" during practice, the kindergarten and second grade students enjoyed counting every number. Two older students encountered a math problem later when they wanted enough characters for two even teams.

G-5: We can count up to ten and then we can like say the calves are there and we can divide them up and it would be like an even team.

Music study was included in various ways. Of course singing skills were addressed in suggesting melodies for the songs and in practicing them. In addition I introduced traditional notation by notating the complete songs. We looked at the note heads and their placement on the music staff. We pointed to them as we sang, following the melodic

contour of the songs, and attempting to match that contour with our voices.

The students brought out tonettes. They all enjoyed making sound with them, but two of the students also practiced the songs with the instruments. This instrumental experience was extended, by the two students independently, to include playing the songs on the piano. This music became our overture.

I presented information about the form of opera when it was relevant to the student's composition. I defined an aria, a song sung by an actor or actress while the action of the story more or less stops. I also pointed out the use of a chorus, in which several characters sing together. Some of our opera had musical conversation, coinciding with the action. This was termed recitative for the students.

For the last song we composed, I brought a set of bells set up in the pentatonic scale, F G A C D. This scale was used for the notes of the melody. The students played as well as sang suggested lines. The sound of the scale reminded one student of music from another culture.

G-5: Seems like a Chinese sound.

Rehearsals and Performance

Much of our rehearsal time was devoted to some kind of language arts study. Certainly the vocabulary of opera was in operation. Terms such as overture, costumes, libretto, choreography, cast, duet, aria, trio, chorus, stage, and

characters were used during my direction and either the students understood the meaning or they asked for clarification.

Mus: You are the cast members.

Z-4: What's that?

Using the voice loudly, clearly, and towards the audience was an emphasis. It was in the form of singing rather than speaking.

J-3: Me and J-2 need to get better at our parts.

Z-4: Yeah, you guys need to sing a little louder.

Two students, a third grader and a kindergarten student, also practiced what to say in an introduction and welcome to the audience.

The components of a play were foremost in our study. We had to be sure that we made the plot clear to the audience. Our actions, words, and expression helped with that. We also had to portray the characters vividly for them. The students discussed their characters and even interviewed each other in the role of the characters.

Mus: Tell, what did you do last week-end?

J-2: Eat pickles.

Mus: Oh, this a pickle-eating calf. Does it make your tongue green?

J-2: It makes it hairy and fuzzy.

Mus: What kind of calf are you?

J-2: A bully.

T-K: He bites and kicks.

P-4: What color are you?

J-2: White.

J-3: Do you have yellow ears and green?

J-2: No, just white.

Reading was reinforced with the lyrics printed on the large music sheets on the wall and on individual practice

sheets. A different use for reading came into play while the students were reading the recipe for the cookies they baked for the post-opera party for cast members and audience.

Both writing skills and computer skills contributed to the posters and programs. Students composed the publicity posters and printed them. They designed and printed the programs, complete with libretto, on the computers.

Movement and spatial awareness were addressed through the staging. We rehearsed use of the stage space, moving from one part of the stage to another, and moving on and off the stage. We practiced and performed the chorus line and bows for the finale. We learned and performed a dance.

Visual art was present in scenery and costumes. Although the classroom teacher took the responsibility for the costumes, the students were actively involved.

MSh: Do they have a yellow shirt?

J-3: Ma doesn't have very much yellow. She only has design shirts for those guys.

F-K: I have a green one.

T-K: I have a blue one.

MSh: You need a black one. The goat needs a black one.

F-K: I have a black one.

Z-4: Do you have a white jacket?

During art class, the students designed and painted the scenery, including a pond that could appear and disappear with a flip of a paper.

Math was evident in the measuring of the paper used for scenery. While making cookies for the party, the students

measured ingredients. They also measured each other and themselves in order to fill out measurement cards for future costume needs. In setting up the chairs for the audience they counted the rows, how many chairs were in the rows, and the total available chairs.

The study of music was evident in the singing. Also they used notation charts for practice. They listened to the piano for introductions, simple accompaniment which supported their singing, and for interludes which filled in action time. Two students studied notation charts and practiced the tonettes and piano in order to perform an overture for the performance.

The opera form dictated that there be music, language, drama, movement, costumes, and scenery. The students added some things, such as the tonette and piano overture. I added dance, often but not necessarily included in opera.

Music Activities

Of course music was integrated throughout the opera experience, as a defining part of this form of musical drama. The children sang, listened, created, moved, read, wrote, and played instruments--the activities of most music curricula--thus learning within the musical art. They also learned about music. They learned about the purpose and symbols of notation. They learned about the musical form, opera. And, in some cases, they used music to learn about other things.

I scheduled some special music sessions. One purpose of these sessions was to practice singing skills. The children

worked on the mechanics of breathing and on posture. They also explored their voices and experienced the different registers, in particular the high or "head voice" register, necessary to their singing. Imagery, including taking on the character of a little mouse, a bear, a dog, and a puppy, contributed to this exploration. Another area of skills involved singing melodic contour and matching pitches. Kinesthetic and visual senses were brought into play by using hand motions with the voice. Along with the skills practice, I shared some science, physiological knowledge about the vocal cords, breath, muscles, and vibrations. I talked about healthful care and use of the voice, including proper hydration and refraining from abusive behaviors.

Another purpose of these special music sessions was to build their repertoire of songs and music activities. We sang folk songs, tall tale songs, and songs that tell stories, with information about the literature aspects of the songs. We sang songs which had actions or movement games, thus incorporating movement. A song in which we added elements required skills of categorizing and memory. In another song, we substituted words, using the cloze method of language study in a musical setting (Mateja, 1982).

Although music is an essential ingredient of the opera form, much of what we did was added by me in the role of music educator.

Post Opera Experiences

In the months following the opera performance, the students had two follow-up sessions on opera. I read the book Madame Nightingale Will Sing Tonight by James Mayhew. It combines visual art (illustrations) and literature to tell a story about forest animals who create an opera. The characters performed many of the same roles that the Four Oaks students did. "Mole was busy writing the music, Mouse made the costumes, Fox painted the scenery, Rabbit sold the tickets, and Squirrel and Badger put up the posters" (p.12-13). The last page included information about opera and a list of operas.

Opera is a play set to music. It tells a story through singing rather than speaking. Just as all the woodland animals had to work together on Madame Nightingale's opera, many people are needed to put together an opera for the stage. A composer writes the music, a librettist writes the words to be sung, singers perform on stage in the theater, and an orchestra plays the music. And behind the scenes are an army of people who make the scenery and the costumes. (p. 30)

The students watched two video tapes of professional opera productions. First they watched Hansel and Gretel, composed by Engelbert Humperdinck. The video was a 1982 performance by the Metropolitan Opera. Music, drama, movement, visual arts were combined with the film media for the presentation. The second opera they watched was a production of Amahl and the Night Visitor, composed by Gian-Carlo Menotti. This video was filmed on location instead of

on stage. Both of these films modeled plot, characters, music, staging, movement, setting, scenery, costumes, and props.

The post-performance activities were part of the project as I designed it. They emphasized the integrated facets that are by definition part of the opera form.

Interviews and Questionnaires

Student Interviews. During interviews of the children, on two separate occasions, there was some evidence brought forth on integration present within the opera form. In response to a question regarding what opera is, the children mentioned some of the integrated elements.

C-3: It's people. They tell a story and then there's this oria (aria). They sing that story, whatever it's about.

J-2: An opera is a thing that people go to see. There's lots of characters in there.

J-K: You sing and stuff.

P-4: An opera is lots of people that, um I don't know. That an opera--it's got songs.

Z-4: Something you sing in. It's like a story but the talking you sing. You help make everything. You practice.

T-K: Sing.

J-3: There's a opera play and you act. Yeah, you work hard on it.

F-K: Something that's fun and something that...

N-K: I'd tell them about it. I'd tell them all about it. That you have to get up stage and go "ah" (warbled).

When pressed a little further, some students added what they did in the process of creating and producing the opera, again mentioning some of the integrated elements.

C-3: Well, first we had two groups and we made two circle stories. Then we put them together. And then we made songs out of them and then we practiced singing them. And then we did the opera in front of all the people who wanted to come.

J-2: We had the overture. Then when we're done with the overture we just do it.

J-K: Oh, we help to make the costumes. And we make the play.

J-3: We just act. We had to think on how we made it.

N-K: I'd say you sing a lot and you "la". I'd tell them about the story, too.

I asked them how the opera was like a movie.

C-3: They were actors and actresses, 'cuz that's what you call them when doing an opera or a play or something.

Z-4: Everyone watched it and we did it on the stage.

T-K: We were good.

F-K: Fun.

J-3: Play is kind of like movie, plays.

I also asked how the opera was like a play.

C-3: We acted in it. And sometimes you sing in a play.

J-2: Yes, opera's like a play.

J-3: Because they got scenery, just like a play does.

F-K: Fun.

N-K: It was kind of like a play. Sometimes we have to sing in our programs.

When I asked them how the opera was like art class they responded:

C-3: Oh, we had to draw the scenery. That's what we did for art.

J-2: Color and painted a background.

P-4: We made costumes. We brought stuff. We painted them.

Z-4: We got to make the back drop, painted and draw it. I didn't draw any of those (programs), I just wrote the posters.

T-K: Drawing.

J-3: We got to paint the scenery and stuff.

F-K: It was being fun. Paint.

N-K: We did drawing with markers.

I also asked how the opera was like reading.

C-3: You had to read your parts and stuff so you knew what you had to say.

Z-4: We had to learn our parts. We read them and remembered them.

J-3: Oh, we had to read our, our let's see, our parts.

Audience Questionnaire. I distributed a questionnaire at the opera performance. Parents, relatives, and community members completed it. One question asked them to mark any areas of study which they saw or heard in the production. The areas listed included: instrumental music, vocal music, artwork, drama, movement, language, social studies, math, and science. Four respondents marked all of the areas with one adding, "Also saw characters acting in terms of their relationships and group dynamics." Most respondents indicated instrumental music, vocal music, artwork, drama, movement, and language, with only a few indicating social studies, math, and science.

Classroom Teacher Interview. Three months after the conclusion of the project, I interviewed the classroom teacher.

Mus: As far as some integration with other things, what areas of the curriculum were integrated in the activities that we did?

MSh: Our language, because we used your story plan that you started out with. We've used it all through the year. And they wrote about it (the opera) in their newspaper. A lot of times in social studies, when we're studying different countries. We just got through with China and you know, they have the opera. So it helps them to understand the opera in the social studies.

Mus: I think it was G-5, when we played the pentatonic scale, who said it sounds like Chinese music.

Msh: It really...I think that it's been just in every day life. They still talk about the opera and how much fun they had doing it.

Mus: Did you see evidence of growth and development as far as thinking skills, problem solving, or creativity?

Msh: Yes, I did. In their story writing and developing little stories. When I give them stories to write they still go back to that plan, you know, where they make the pie and the circle. That was great.

Mus: Did you think that there was growth and development as far as self-esteem and cooperative work?

Msh: Very much so, especially in the ___ kids, because they got to do something. They don't get to participate in our Christmas parties or any of the parties except Thanksgiving (for religious reasons). So it was really an esteem builder for them. They found out, "I can do it." It really helped, writing the opera, putting all the ideas down, and working in the group. It really helped J-3 in his language skills, too. Because before then, when you gave him something to write, he just froze. But now he's getting so he can put a few sentences together into a story. I'm sure that it was the opera that helped him to do that.

She then talked briefly about one home in which praise is very rare, and how important that support is to the children.

Mus: Did you notice growth and development in their musical abilities?

Msh: Yes, I have. They've been down there working that piano. They play songs and then they look up the holes up and figure out what the note is (on tonette charts). In fact, they've figured out some of the songs that they can play with just that little bit of information they have down there.

When asked to respond to a list of benefits compiled by a classroom teacher involved in a previous original student opera project, the classroom teacher agreed with all but two. Those two she marked as "not observed", although some of the

descriptive data indicates that these two were in evidence. This list of benefits is included in the appendix.

In an informal conference during the project, the classroom teacher mentioned that her students were studying interviews. This study correlated with the interviews I conducted with them as students and also the interviews we conducted in their roles as characters.

Relevance to the Children's Lives

One tenet of child-centered, discovery learning education, as presented in whole language teaching, music education, and in child-centered teaching in general, is that the learning/teaching situations must be relevant to the children's lives. The data from this project revealed that the children made the project relevant, evidenced by the elements of the products (the opera and other constituent parts of the project) and by their working conversations during the process. Furthermore, the relevance was recognized by the students, the teacher, and the audience participants. In addition, school productions, such as the original student opera, are a part of the rural school community life and thus relevant to the whole community.

Elements of the Products

The characters of the original stories, the formative stories and the final story, were characters who were familiar to the children. The first story included a horse, a goat,

chickens, sheep, an antelope, and a cow. The next level of stories included the characters: horse, cat, dog, donkey, squirrel, cow, snake, and calves. The final story featured a bull, his two calves, a horse, a dog, a cat, a donkey, a goat, a squirrel, and a snake.

The problems found in the plots were problems familiar to the children. In the first story the main character was sad and lonely and went looking for someone to be his friend. The second level of stories included a group of animals trying to find enough participants to play a game and a mother cow and her calves who became separated. The final story presented two problems: the animals looking for enough participants for a game and the parent cow (a bull) and twin calves who become separated.

The dangers which were suggested as complications to the plot included dangers with which the children were familiar. Wild animals such as snakes, coyotes, wolves, mountain lions, and wasps were suggested. Man also presented a possible danger, in the form of a butcher and of a hunter. Disasters which occur in ranch life posed potential problems: breaking a leg, getting lost in tall grass, and getting caught in a trap.

The settings included pastures, sheep pen, woods, mountains, an orchard, and a farm yard. Details included a grain bin, a water tank, and a watering dam.

Working Discussion Evidence

During their working discussion, the children revealed connections they made between their lives and their opera material. While drawing and coloring a barn, part of the setting of a story, a kindergarten student told about the barn on their ranch. His great great grandfather had built it. The community used to have dances in it.

While drawing a sheep, which was a character in a story, a third grader told about his sheep.

J-3: Well, we had a sheep and he was kind of lame. ...gave him to me and we didn't shear him for like four years. We finally sheared him and he had a bunch of wool! But he got stuff from the cowtrail and died.

A kindergarten student added comments about his experience with sheep.

J-K: You should have seen this sheep I rode at Aladdin Ranch. It's a big one. I made it to the whistle.

As an invitation to expand their stories, I asked about adding danger, or action, or mystery to their stories. One group suggested that coyotes or wolves could be a danger. This led to a discussion about introducing wolves to the area by wildlife conservationists. At a different time, a similar discussion of dangers led to stories of livestock lost to predators. When one kindergarten student suggested a dingo as a possible source of danger, however, the other children told him that dingos "live in Australia." They did not think his suggestion was appropriate for their story.

My invitation to add elements of danger was met by suggestions about human danger from another student.

J-3: You want me to butcher her? One of the guys is trying to kill the cow...A big old hunter just chasing a baby. Maybe a butcher chasing a cow on the first page.

The suggestion of a snake threat brought stories of seeing snakes and discussions of different kinds of snakes.

Mus: How would you sing it if you saw a snake?

G-5: That's how I'd do it. I saw a bullsnake. I got chased by a bullsnake.

N-K: He tried to hiss, too. He hissed. He should try to snap, try to strike, I mean.

As the students discussed possible characters, they related stories about their own ranch animals or pets.

C-3: How 'bout a barn cat? That's what we have. He's always groggy in the house 'cause they just lie around, but in the barn they have to...

When the students named the opera characters a connection to reality became evident.

J-3: Mine is Big Brute. Yeah, it's just like my other calf that I had, the one that I sold.

Z-4: Black Foot. Because we had a calf and he was white and only one of his foot's black, so we named him Black Foot.

F-K: Thomas.

J-3: That's what our old cat was.

Several glimpses into the children's lives were revealed in passing. One child suggested the Pizza Hut as a setting. Another mentioned movies he had seen about animals, as he colored pictures of the animal characters in the original story. When confronting the problem of even numbers of characters for the game, an extra character was suggested as

a cheerleader. Another child made several references to a common social problem during a discussion of plot.

P-4: He doesn't have a sense of humor because the mice make fun of him. In a different country maybe cats and mice would be friends. Maybe an owl that makes fun of him, like usually everyone has.

Students often talked about previous Christmas programs and plays which they had presented. Their original opera was categorized with these prior performances.

Student Recognition of Relevance

During a break from rehearsals, the students and I discussed certain aspects of their opera, and how these were related to their lives. I asked them what the feelings would be when the Daddy Bull discovered the calves were missing.

Z-4: Scared.

J-3: We (the calves) say it's fun.

Z-4: When your parents aren't watching you can get in trouble all the time.

Mus: Oh, so it is a little like real boys?

Several: Yeah.

I asked them about experiences they had had when they'd been lost or scared.

Z-4: At the carnival, they went down and watched wrestling and I didn't know it. They didn't tell me and I didn't know where they were.

J-3: One time, chasing the cows, I was way behind them because I was trying to get one cow and baby. I caught up with them and then I lost them again.

P-4: Whenever I think I was four I got lost in a big mall. I started looking around. I stopped somebody and told. Before they left I didn't hear anything like come on...

J-K: Well, when I was scared, sometimes when they take ... to the bus; I stay home by myself.

N-K: Once when my mom was at the bus stop to pick up ... and cartoons were on I feel scared. She

always jabbers with my grandma. Then I called her on the radio.

J-2: I got lost in a church once. I couldn't find Mom and Dad.

J-3: I got lost at Walmart once 'cause Mom was somewhere else.

I also asked them about living in the country and trying to get enough players together for a game.

Z-4: No, well, yeah, but you never get enough.

J-3: I was trying to look for a couple of kids to play baseball and I did find them, all my brothers.

While creating the stories, someone had mentioned that the squirrel would be frightened to play with the big animals because he was so little. I questioned the students about whether or not they ever experienced that feeling.

N-K: No, I don't feel small around horses. I ride.

Z-4: I'm scared of one of my dad's horses. He's really crazy.

J-3: We had a different bull and he charged at us, hit the pickup.

During the post-performance interviews with the students, I asked how the opera was like their real life, how it was like being a kid in Wyoming.

C-3: That's a hard question. Yeah, we round up people for kickball, like here. You go ask everybody so you can play kickball. And you play.

J-2: The trees and stuff, the background, 'cause we have trees at our house.

J-K: Oh, think about operas--Christmas operas, Easter operas, Halloween operas...

P-4: Sometimes.

Z-4: Because we did it about cows and animals that live on farms.

T-K: Um hum yes.

J-3: Oh, when I was a calf and I got lost.

F-K: Fun. Thomas the cat died (He had named his character after a former cat of theirs).

N-K: Sometimes we have to sing in our programs.

Teacher Recognition of Relevance

Three months after the performance I interviewed the classroom teacher. She talked about the importance of programs in general, and of the opera, to the children and to the community.

Mus: How important are programs, like the Christmas program, and plays they put on out here?

MSh: I think they're very important, because it helps the children to express themselves. They need to get over their fear of talking in front of a group. I feel that it's to their advantage to do those kinds of things.

Mus: Does it seem to be important to the community also?

MSh: Very much so. The community--they love it. They like to see their children performing. And then they always tape it or take pictures. They look forward to it every year.

Mus: How does the opera experience compare with the other programs and plays? Is it pretty much the same?

MSh: I would say that it was the same. I know that the parents were just overjoyed with it. You know they really didn't believe, when we were talking about opera and writing it and producing it. I don't think they felt like the kids could do it. And then they were all really impressed.

Mus: Do you feel that your students accepted opera as being just real and normal, or did they think opera was kind of weird, singing things and so forth?

MSh: No, I think that once they found out what opera was, that they really enjoyed it and they talked about it. They have heard opera on t.v. and they came to school and told me about it. "They did this and this...like we did here."

In informal conversations, the classroom teacher also talked about how important the programs are to the children and to the community. Parents are not the only ones who attend. Much of the community supports the functions. An additional indication of relevance came from one of the

questions on the teacher's questionnaire. In assessing student benefits, the classroom teacher agreed with the statement: recognition of literature as mirror of human experience and reflection of culture.

Community Recognition of Relevance

Community members who attended the performance were asked to fill out a questionnaire. Nearly two-thirds of those present did. One of the questions was:

Did tonight's opera seem to be: pure fantasy
realistic
a mixture of both

Two-thirds of the respondents answered, "a mixture of both."

Another question asked:

Did any of the story or characters seem to reflect life in rural Crook County, Wyoming? How?

The responses included:

Very much so, in the children's terms.
The theme and characters were appropriate to the students' experiences. Good match.
Yes--finding enough players for a team; looking for young ones.
Cows & calves, squirrels & snakes.
Yes, the animals.
The characters.
The animals, the landscape, the livelihood of ranch-farm life.
Yes. There are lots of animals and fun.
The livestock.
Yes, used animal characters, games, and life situations that really exist day-to-day.
Yes, they all were animals.

The student original opera had relevance to the children's lives because the children were at the center of the experience. Their creation was a natural outgrowth of

their lives. The relevance issue was summed up in this conversation.

J-3: This story's true, isn't it?

C-3: Yeah.

Summary of Data

Integration

Integration occurred during the process of creating and producing the original student opera. Many subject areas were involved to varying degrees. The sources for integration were the opera form, the design of the project, and the personnel involved.

Music. Learning included vocal skills, vocal performance, instrumental performance, study of musical forms (opera), listening skills, creating skills, movement skills, vocabulary, and notation reading and writing. Students fulfilled roles of: performer, composer, arranger, critic, and to some extent conductor and technician. Their own music was studied as well as the music of others.

Visual arts. Learning included learning about, observing on film, and constructing costumes, sets, scenery, props, programs, posters. Illustrations for stories were created as well as observed in the work of others.

Language arts. Learning in language arts was part of every aspect of the project. The students studied story form:

plot, episodes, problem, solution, characters, and setting. They used this form for their own creations. They used written communication in notebooks, in letters, in their newsletter, and in writing their libretto. Their vocabulary increased with words about music and opera as well as other incidental words. They worked on conventions of writing: spelling, grammar, and punctuation. They experienced dialogue, narrative, figurative language, humor, couplets, rhyme, and interviews. There was constant verbal communication. The students were exposed to literature of others as well as experiencing their own.

Drama. Experiences included improvisation of a folk story as well as acting their opera. There was special emphasis on portrayal of the characters and communicating the plot. They also watched videos of two professional operas.

Movement. Movement was emphasized in the movements on stage (spatial awareness) and in moving between the stage and the backstage area. In addition a dance was choreographed for the opera, reflecting a kickball game. Games and movements were included during skills sessions.

Social studies. Learning was centered around their own lives, their rural way of life, and their community. This relevance was reflected especially in their stories' plots, characters, settings, and problems and in the students' working conversation. They developed skills in working

together. They used voting for decisions, along with compromise and collaboration. The opera production itself became part of ongoing school/community public relations.

Science. Science was present in the forms of earth science and agricultural science. The children made reference to farm animals, wild animals, predators, natural dangers, agricultural features, and natural soil and environmental factors.

Math. Skills were in evidence with counting and numbering. Geometric shape and line segments were part of the figures illustrating story form. Measuring was important for scenery, costumes, and cookie making.

Computer. Computer technology was involved in the making of posters, programs, and newsletter articles. Word processing and graphics were used.

Sources of Integration. Much of the integration occurred because of the opera form itself. Of necessity there were music, visual art, drama, movement, and language. The project design also dictated much of the integration, not only in study and skills but also in the creative aspects in music, visual art, language, math, and movement. Other integrative elements were injected into the project by the children, through their ideas and through the incorporation of their past experience. The science and social studies elements were

brought in by them. The classroom teacher made special efforts to coordinate language, visual art, and social studies learning. The community was part of the social studies integration.

Relevance

The design of the project allowed the students to create their opera. The children, during the process, made it relevant. They injected their ideas and experiences. They used the project to mirror their rural way of life as well as their personal views.

This relevance is evident in the characters, settings, plots, and problems that the students created during the process and which found their places in the products--the stories, songs, and opera production. The relevance is also evident in the students' working conversations, which indicate that they related the opera to other school and outside-of-school experiences.

Personal and social growth occurred, which would affect school and out-of-school behavior. The students took responsibility for the entire creation and production of the opera. They filled the roles of writer, librettist, composer, dramatist, dancer, singer, and publicist. The experience promoted confidence, pride, and self-esteem. The production itself provided an important link between school and community.

The opera form provided relevance. It provided another tool for thinking, learning, and communicating. It was a naturally-integrated way to fulfill the need to tell a story.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe and document the process which occurred when children interacted with the opera form in an original student opera project which was designed in alignment with child-centered, discovery methodology. Under particular examination were integration of subject areas and relevance to children's lives. The resultant data was analyzed to determine presence of integration, subject areas integrated, the source of the integration, and presence of relevance to the children's lives. Information gathered in the study resulted in the following findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Findings

Analysis of data provides the basis for the following findings:

1. Integration of subject areas was observed in the process as well as the product of the original student opera project.
2. Integration occurred to varying degrees in the areas of music, visual arts, language arts, drama, movement, social studies, science, mathematics, computer technology. Most

common was the integration of language arts, music, drama, and visual arts.

3. Integration occurred from a variety of sources: the integral nature of the opera form, the design of the project, and the personnel involved (students, classroom teacher, music teacher, and community).

4. There was evidence of relevance to the children's lives. Some areas especially reflected this relevance: elements of their original stories, including characters, plot, problems, and setting; personal growth and growth as a member of a social/academic group; and the importance of school performances to the community. The opera form and the project provided some of the relevance. Most of the relevance was injected by the students themselves and reflected their lives and their community's rural way of life.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Practice

1. Studying and creating opera can provide learning experiences in many subject areas. I recommend that the opera form be used as a learning tool which is naturally integrated rather than contrived.

2. Opera study can be presented in a child-centered manner in which opera is a real, functional, meaningful, and relevant experience. I recommend that opera study be adapted to a child-centered, discovery learning setting. In such a setting the students actively participate in all phases of opera

creation and production. They learn to be musicians, visual artists, writers, actors, dramatists, constructors (of sets and costumes), producers, publicists, composers, dancers, and critics by actually fulfilling those roles.

3. The original student opera project offers opportunity for many forms of intelligence to be exercised, explored, and developed. This in turn may enable a student to approach a problem or area of study within school or outside of school with a wider array of tools.

Our students and population in general can benefit from having alternate learning tools. Often we have a narrow view of learning and limit ourselves by the tools we use for learning. We readily recognize the importance of language and mathematical/logical intelligence but often overlook other intelligences such as musical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and interpersonal (Gardner, 1983).

Harold Taylor, author and educator, observed that "education should 'open up the mind and nourish the sensibilities,' and that is what happens when schools cultivate the artistic intelligences" (Fowler, 1990, p.27). Original student opera provides an opportunity for students to develop their sensitivity, perceptions, and imaginations--in short, to grow and develop.

I recommend that original student opera be available as a tool for children to learn about themselves, about others, and about the world of ideas, people, and things (impression

or input). It should also be available as a tool for the children to communicate to others their ideas, thoughts, and feelings (expression or output).

4. Opera can be created and produced by children whose skills in the component areas are at any level. However, I recommend that specialized skills and knowledge sessions be provided before, during, and after the opera project and, in fact, should be a continuous part of their education.

5. Student composers, librettists, costumers, and producers can learn from professionals in the opera field in much the same way that student authors can learn from and relate to the works of professional authors. The professional performances serve not only as models but also as a link between children and masters in the field. I recommend that related literature, such as video productions of professional opera performances or attendance at live performances, be used along with the children's creation and production.

6. Original student opera projects can be guided by just one adult facilitator. I recommend, however, to have at least a classroom teacher and a music teacher involved. If there are other resource people available, specialized teachers or artists, they would benefit the project. Parents and community members may also become involved.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. I recommend that music educators study the philosophical basis, research, and models found in language arts programs such as process writing and whole language, programs which put the child in the center of his or her own learning and which furnish the child with real and relevant language events. The leadership of the language arts methodologies can serve as encouragement and models for pursuit of child-centered, discovery learning methodology in the arts.

2. I recommend that music educators continue to do research which will increase understanding of the discovery method. In-depth description and analysis in qualitative studies would "move beyond quantifying the occurrence of response to constructing an understanding of the particular conditions that nurture more complex understandings" (McClure, 1990, p. 10).

3. I recommend that music educators continue to do research which will verify the effectiveness of learning in the arts. "A philosophical basis has been established for discovery learning as a methodology. All that remains is a foundation of research to verify its effectiveness" (Costanza & Russell, 1992, p. 504). The research can be both quantitative and qualitative in nature. I caution that research be clear on what learning is actually being assessed. Learning in other areas through the use of the arts is not the same as learning

about the arts or learning skills, knowledge, and attitudes within the arts processes (Fowler, 1988).

4. I recommend that music educators need to continue to build on philosophical bases, theory, and research in order to develop child-centered, discovery learning models of curriculum "to make music, including improvisation and composition, accessible to children...One way of developing such musicianship is by integrating music, as modeled by the whole language approach, with all of the other subjects, particularly with the visual and dramatic arts" (Upitis, 1990, p.8). I recommend that along with integrated curriculum, however, there should be specialized instruction in the individual arts.

5. I recommend other studies of original student opera in different settings and with other populations. These studies would involve children with backgrounds that differ both academically and socially from the children in this study. Studies of different age groups and configurations may also yield different results. These studies would broaden the understanding and offer comparisons of variables involved.

6. I recommend research on original student opera projects which involve student notation systems, as modeled in studies by Bamberger and Upitis (Bamberger, 1982; Upitis, 1986, 1990, 1992).

7. I recommend some longitudinal studies which would look at the role of opera in the participants' adult lives.

8. There were many other facets of the original student opera project that would be interesting to study. One area for study would be collaborative creative endeavors and how decisions are made in cooperative learning.

9. The one-room rural school suggests interesting studies on the dynamics of small groups and vertical age grouping.

Personal Commentary

The original student opera project, as developed by these wonderful children, renewed my sizeable respect for children and their capacity and desire for learning. At the same time it became clear to me that creative, integrative, and relevant projects such as this one provide realistic and effective curricular options.

The children readily accepted the form of opera, even though it was nearly unknown to them prior to the project. Some of their contributing skills, especially singing and creative writing, were not highly developed, but we began the process of creating an opera at their level of development. This is an example of the "taking them where they are" attitude often espoused by educators. The children willingly became involved in every aspect of the opera experience. Their comments and working conversation were very positive. At the conclusion of the project they said they would do it again.

I have heard some teachers comment about productions such as ours, saying something to the effect that it is very nice but they could never justify taking so much time away from school work. These are often teachers who are not involved in such a project and who think of the finished product, in this case the performance, as the objective. In my experience, a project which is concerned with the learning process and which places the children in active learning roles does not take away from learning time. Instead it enriches and adds to the students' learning. Such a project addresses the whole child: physical, emotional, social, and cognitive. Learning occurs in many subject areas. Various thinking and learning skills are exercised including critical thinking, problem solving, and imagination. The growth and development fostered by such a project are the very goals of education as I see them.

The knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained during the original student opera project will serve the children now and throughout their lives. Elliot Eisner calls the school curriculum "a mind-altering device" (Fowler, 1990, p. 26). Experiences such as this project have the potential to make children more imaginative, more perceptive, more aware, and more open-minded for the rest of their lives (Eisner, 1987). The experiences can affect positively the quality of the students' lives as individuals and enrich the fabric of our collective society.

Recently I heard a comment on a television talk show which echoed comments I have heard in the past. During the evaluation of an exciting and fun learning experience, the show's hostess said that the children were learning but they did not know it. They were just having fun. As I reflected on that statement I thought of the respect that I have for children and for their desire to learn, a drive evident from birth unless it is squelched or distorted by damaging factors. The students of Four Oaks School who participated in the original student opera project were enjoying their experience. They were having fun. But they were very aware that they were learning. In no way did their learning translate to a lack of fun or excitement. They were in the active center of an integrated, relevant, and exciting learning experience.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

OPERA LIBRETTO AND NOTATION

THE KICKBALL GAME

Words and Music by The Four Oaks Opera Company

Scene one: The Mama Cow (Daddy Bull) is grazing in the pasture with the two calves. Soon they get separated.

IN THE MEADOW

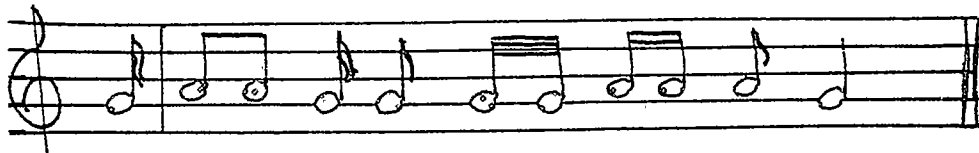
Black Foot
Big Brute
Pickley



Oh Man! This grass is good and green

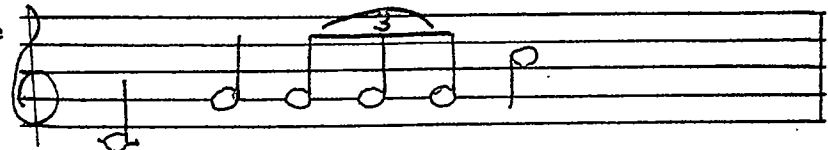


I want to stay here for the rest of my life.



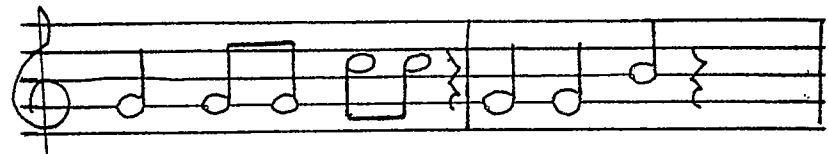
The sun is shin-ing. It's a ver-y nice day.

Big Brute
Pickley

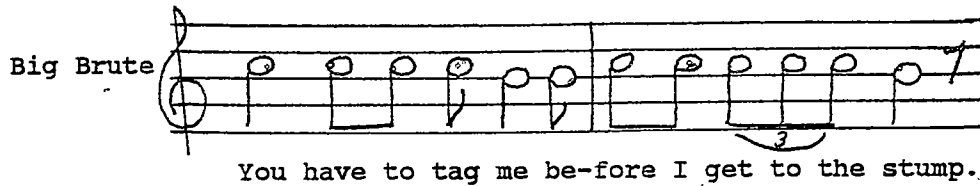
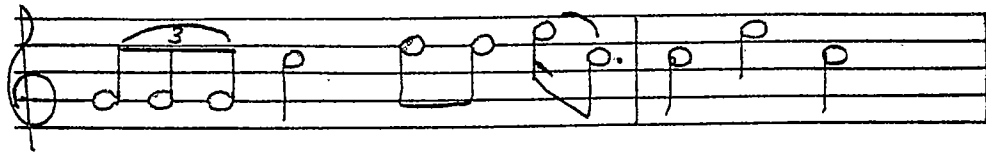
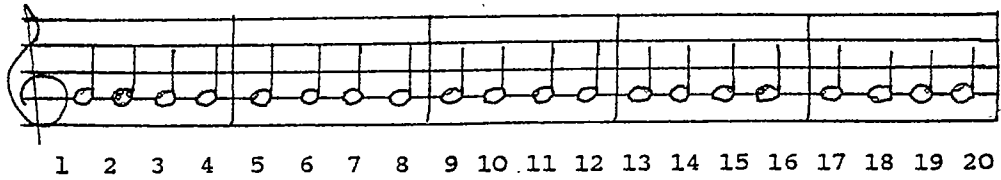


Let's play hide and go seek

Pickly



I'll count to twen-ty and you hide



Scene two: The calves have scampered off, looking for their parent. Meanwhile the parent (Black Foot, the Bull) is lamenting his calves' disappearance.

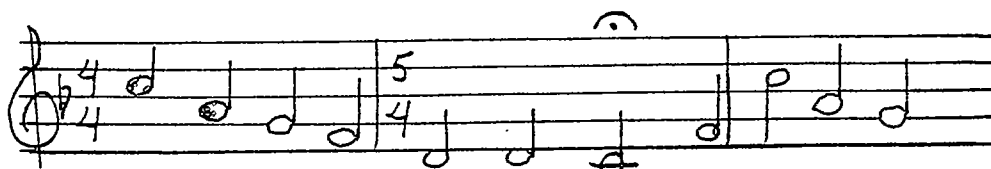
LOOKING FOR THE CALVES (aria)

free rhythm





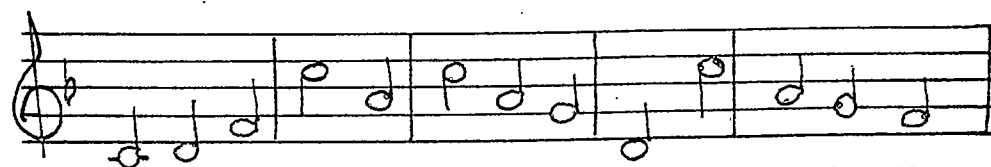
I for-got all a-bout them. I was just so hap-py,



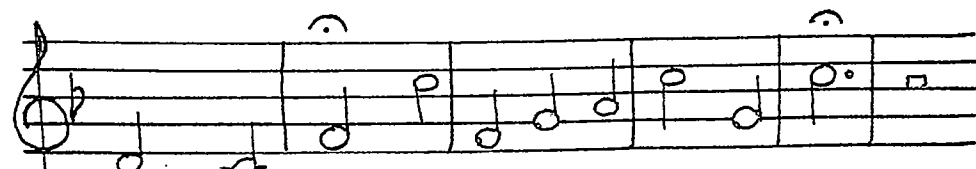
munch-ing on this cool green grass, that I for-got



all a-bout them. I won-der if an-y -thing caught them.



May-be a coy-ote, may-be a wolf, or may-be they



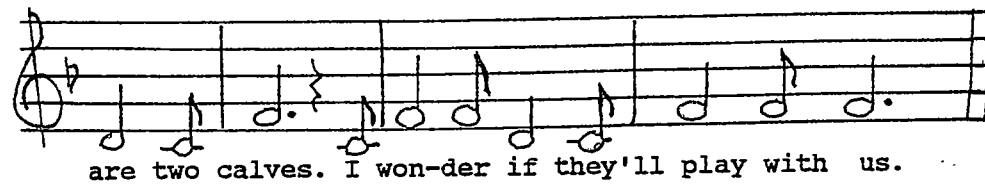
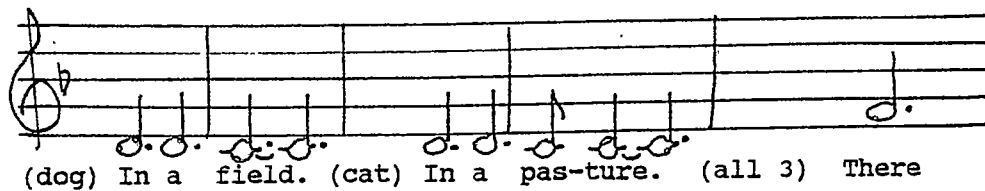
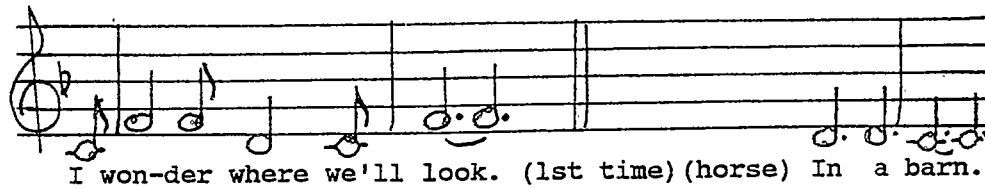
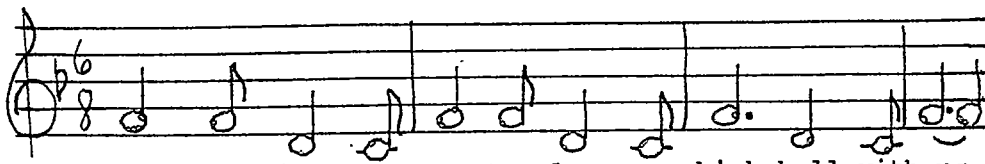
broke their legs. Or may-be a snake got them.



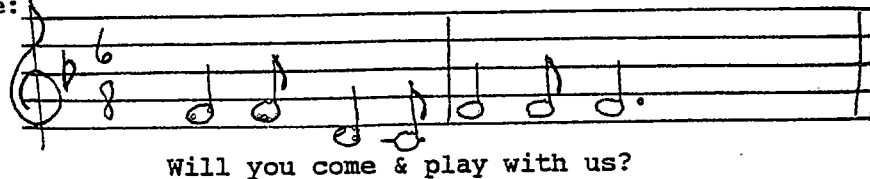
I'd bet-ter go find them.

Scene three: Lightning Bolts, the horse, and Thomas, the cat, and Kelly, the dog, are looking for other players to play kickball. They meet the calves and they join them. Then they meet the donkey, Joe, and he joins them. Next they meet Adam, the goat, and he joins them. The first two lines of the song, "Looking for People", are sung first by three, then by five, then by six animals. Each time the group meets a new animal one of the group will sing an improvised invitation and the responder will improvise an answer (a sample is given).

LOOKING FOR PEOPLE



Sample:



Sample:

I'd like to play kick-ball with you.

Scene four: The group of seven animals are thirsty. They look for and find a pond from which to drink. While there, they see a squirrel. They invite him to come play, but he turns them down.

LOOKING FOR A POND

(horse) I am thirst-y. (all) We are, too.

We are look-ing for a pond to drink out of.

We found a pond to drink out of.

(donkey) I see a squir-rel. Squir-rel, do you want to play?

(squirrel) No, thanks an-y-way.

Scene five: The animals continue on their search. They meet a snake who frightens them.

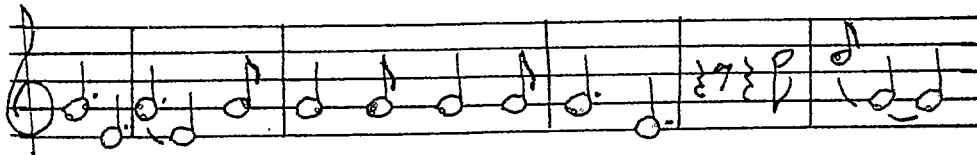
THE SNAKE STRIKES



Let's go find some more to play kick-ball with us.



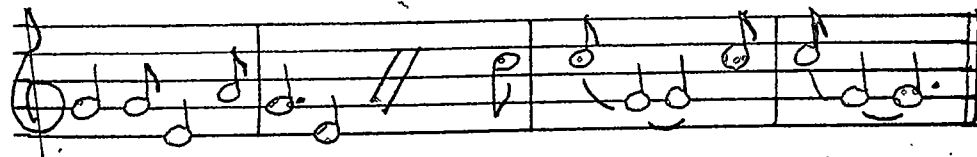
Let's count how many play-ers we've got. 1 2 3 4



5 6 7. We need an-oth-er per-son. Oh no!

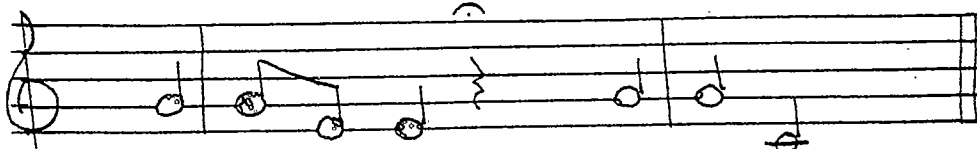


A snake! Run! (snake) I'm going to get you.



Ha ha ha ha ha ha. (all) He's go-ing to strike!
(as they run off stage)

Scene six: The animals are all gathered together. The parent cow (bull) finds them and is reunited with the calves. They all sing the "Playing Kickball" song. The squirrel joins them, too. They dance the dance. Then the snake joins them for the finale, one more time through the song. The bull and the calves improvise their greetings. A sample is given.

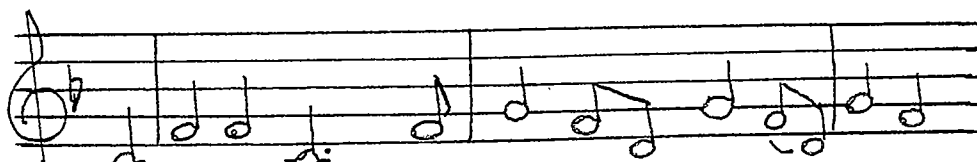


(bull) Oh there they are. (calves) We found you.

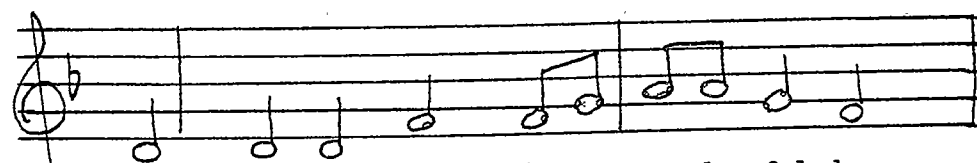
PLAYING KICKBALL



We like to play kick-ball. We play in the sum-mer



and in the fall. It's fun when we all get out to



play. With our friends, it's a won-der-ful day.

Dance: The players form a circle. They: step step step kick step step step kick pass pass pass pass (pass the kickball from person to person high overhead). They do this two times to piano accompaniment. Then they line up and sing the finale.

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO PARENTS

STUDENT INTERVIEWS

TEACHER INTERVIEW

AUDIENCE SURVEY

BENEFITS COMMENTS SHEET

PERMISSION FORM

Black Hills State University
USB 9103
Spearfish, S.D. 57799-9103
September 14, 1993

Dear Parent(s):

This Fall I will be spending time at Four Oaks School, working with the students. I am very pleased to have this opportunity and would like to share some information with you about the project.

I am a music education instructor at Black Hills State University. I am also a doctoral candidate in education and music at Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana. I am very interested in projects that combine music with other subject areas.

Project plans include having the students study a story writing model and then writing their own stories (in small groups). One story will be chosen to develop further and adapt to a play. This play will be set to music to make an opera. The children will be doing all of the work. I will act as guide, resource person, and manager. In addition I will be observing them in order to understand better the process that they go through in the creation and production of the opera. Eventually I will write a paper describing the project.

I very much enjoy working with children; I think they will enjoy the project, too. In my paper I will be very careful to protect their anonymity and privacy.

I look forward to meeting you. We will be producing your children's opera this fall, the date to be announced later.

Sincerely,

Susan C. Hove-Pabst

STUDENT INTERVIEW #1

1. How old are you?
2. In what grade are you?
3. Tell me what you know about opera.

(if they made response: Did you know that before or have you learned that since we have been meeting?)
4. Have you ever seen an opera?
5. Have you seen any movies with a lot of music in them?

STUDENT INTERVIEW #2

1. What were the things you liked best about your opera?
2. Was there anything you didn't particularly like about your opera?
3. Would you ever want to make another opera? (Why or why not?)
4. If someone were to ask you what an opera is, what would you tell them?
5. Suppose a new kid moved to Four Oaks and asked you what you did with the opera, how you made it? What would you tell him or her? How would you describe the process?
6. If you had a chance to go see an opera would you want to go?
7. How was your opera like: a movie, a play, art class, reading?
8. How was your opera like your life--being a kid on a ranch in Wyoming?
9. When you kids were making decisions about the opera, as when you were making it up, how did you decide how to do things?
10. What did you learn from our opera experience?

TEACHER INTERVIEW

1. How important are programs, like the Christmas program and plays they put on out here?
2. Does it seem to be important to the community, too?
3. How does the opera experience compare with the other programs and plays? Is it pretty much the same?
4. Do you feel that your students accepted opera as being just real and normal or did they think opera was kind of weird--singing things and stuff?
5. As far as some integration with other things, what areas of the curriculum were integrated in the activities that we did?
6. Did you see evidence of growth and development as far as thinking skills, problem solving and creativity?
7. Did you think that there was growth and development as far as self-esteem and cooperative work?
8. Did you note growth and development in musical abilities?
9. In general, how much music instruction do they have?
10. Would you say that these kids come from very musical homes?

SURVEY: FOUR OAKS OPERA PROJECT

The opera project which Four Oaks School is just now completing is part of the research work for my doctoral dissertation. I am enjoying the children and the experience very much. I ask you to please help by filling out this questionnaire before you leave this evening (if you should happen to forget, you may drop it by Four Oaks). Thank you for taking the extra time and thank you for attending our opera.

Name _____

Which best describes you?

- I am a parent of a Four Oaks student.
- I am a relative other than a parent.
- I am a community member.

1. How would you describe your understanding of opera before tonight's experience?

- I knew what opera is.
- I had an idea what opera is.
- I had very little idea what opera is.
- I knew nothing about opera.

Further comments:

2. Have you ever attended a live opera before? If so what did you see and where?

3. Have you ever seen an opera on t.v. or in a movie? If so what?

4. Have you ever listened to an opera on the radio?

5. In tonight's opera production, what did you see/hear? Mark any that apply.

- instrumental music
- vocal music
- artwork
- drama
- movement
- language
- social studies
- math
- science
- other:

6. Did tonight's opera seem to be: pure fantasy
realistic
a mixture of both

7. Did any of the story or characters seem to reflect life in rural Crook County Wyoming? How?

8. How did you hear about tonight's opera?

9. Under what circumstances would you go to another opera?
(You may mark more than one)

If a professional company came to the area(Gillette/Spearfish)

If a professional company came to the state (Casper, Sheridan)

If you had a chance to be in a community opera

If a local adult group put on an opera

If a local school put on an opera

If Four Oaks put on another opera

Under no circumstances would I attend another opera

10. Have you learned anything about opera through tonight's performance? What?

11. If you have talked with the children who participated, did you learn anything about opera from their telling you about it? What?

ANY OTHER COMMENTS ARE WELCOMED. THANK YOU.

BENEFITS COMMENTS SHEET

Listed below are comments written about an original student opera project carried out in a rural elementary school. These comments were written by the classroom teacher involved. Please circle the response which reflects your experience with an original student opera project in your school.

In answer to the so-whats of the opera critics:

1) Integrates communication skills with music and art and drama

AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED

2) Writing exercise that emphasizes process and focuses on communication of ideas

AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED

3) Incorporates oral language activity

AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED

4) Opportunity for students to pursue special gifts and interests through language, music, drama, art

AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED

5) Cooperative learning, small-group discussion technique of learning

AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED

6) Sharpens listening skills

AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED

7) Self-esteem through success in performance

AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED

8) Recognition and use of rhythm in language

AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED

9) Nurturing of creative, logical, and critical thinking

AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED

10) Awareness of how context...topic, purpose, audience...influences structure and use of language

AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED

11) Recognition of literature as mirror of human experience and reflection of culture

AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED

12) Effective expression of feelings, imagination

AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED

- 13) Understand point of view in literature
AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED
- 14) Explore relationships in literature
AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED
- 15) Recognize and understand interrelationships among the elements in a literary work
AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED
- 16) Appreciate and understand how language enhances meaning in literature and how meaning is enhanced by sensory and figurative language, literary devices
AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED
- 17) Use in writing of plot, theme, setting, characters, and imagery
AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED
- 18) Increase confidence and effectiveness as speaker
AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED
- 19) The usual punctuation, capitalization, spelling, etc. aspects of writing
AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED
- 20) Respond to, revise, and edit writing
AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED
- 21) Understand that media conveys a message
AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED
- 22) Expand creativity, inventiveness, and logical/critical thinking
AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED
- 23) Experience a sense of accomplishment and pleasure from experimentation, innovation, and skill development
AGREE DISAGREE NOT OBSERVED

This list was compiled by: Connie L. Anderson, McLeod School, McLeod, Montana

Please add any of your own statements or comments on this page or on a separate page(s). Thank you.

PERMISSION FOR USE FORM

I grant to Susan C. Hove-Pabst permission to use words, photographs, video images, and illustrations of the student(s) acquired during the student original opera project for the purposes of research reporting, articles, and/or books.

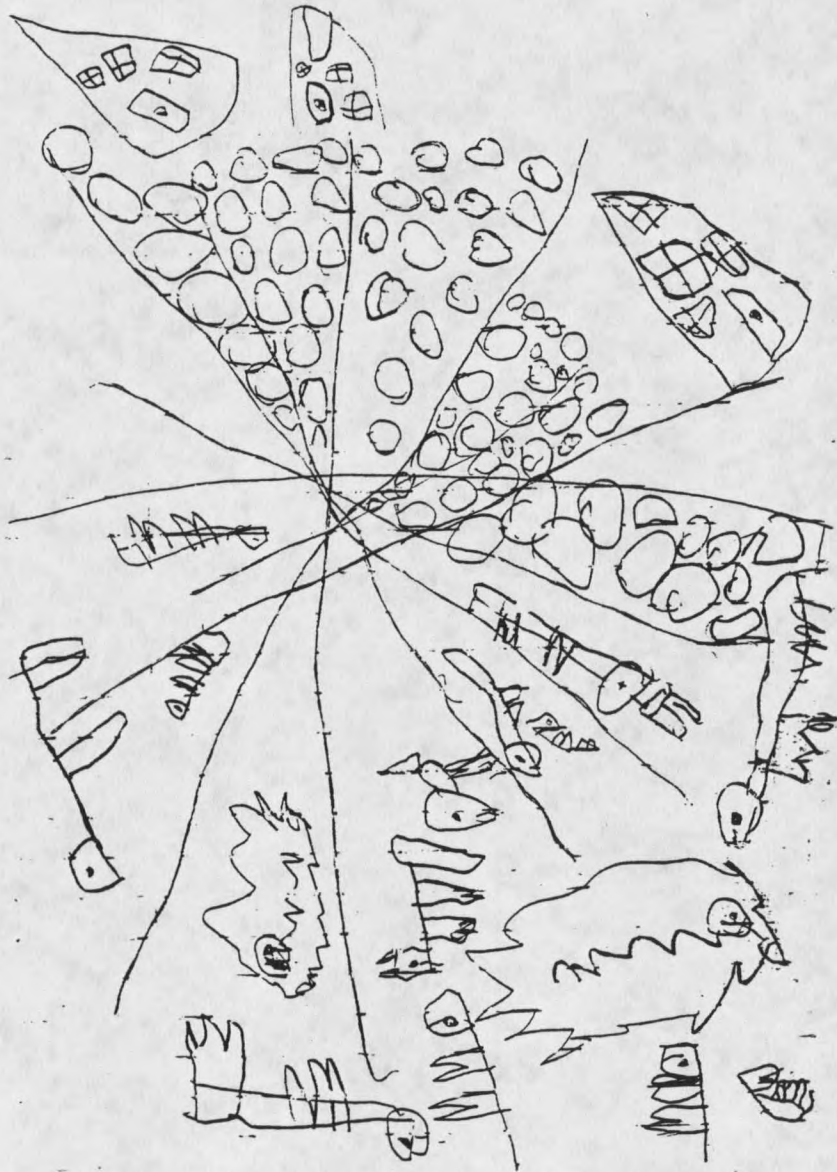
Student(s) Name(s) _____

Parent(s) Signature(s) _____

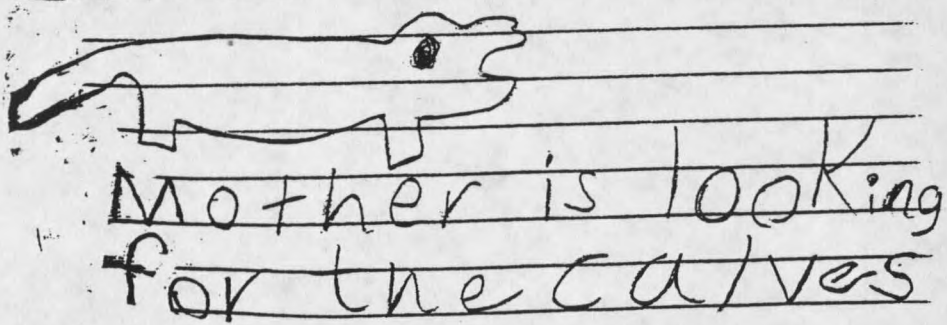
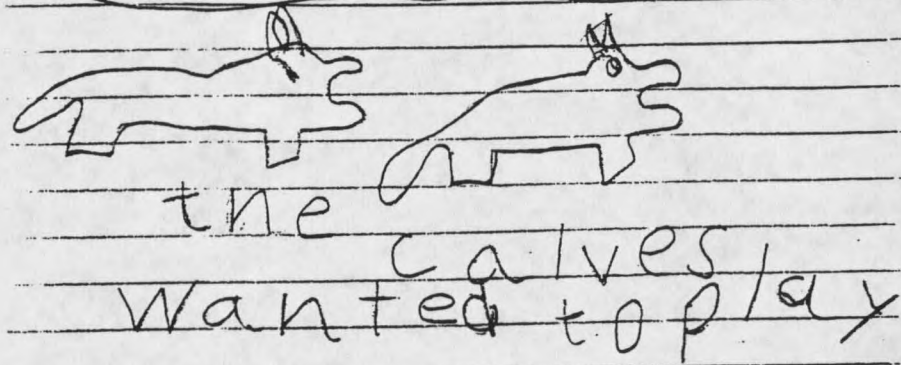
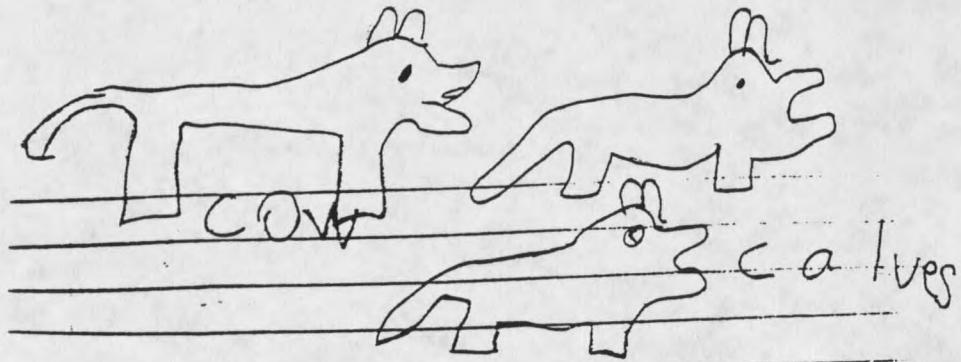
- I would prefer use of a fictitious name
- You may use real name

APPENDIX C

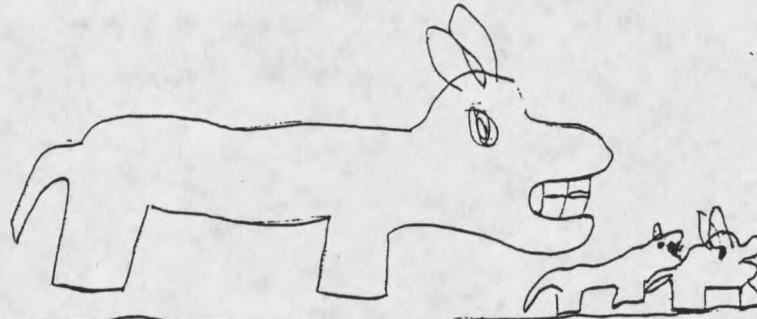
SAMPLE NOTEBOOK ENTRIES



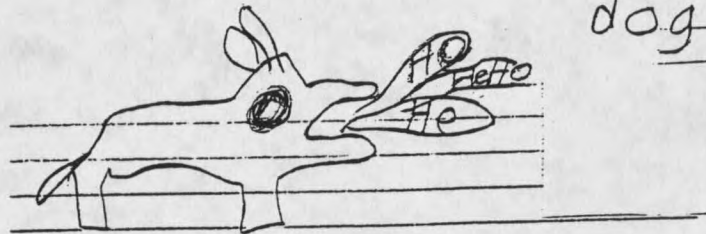
Notebook Entry: A Kindergarten Student's Diagram of the Circle Story Created for the Opera



Notebook Entry: A Second Grade Student's Illustrations of
the Story Created for the Opera



They met the horse,
and the cat and the
dog



They met the
donkey

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