

Music Education Guest Reflection

Dr. Carlos Abril

Today, our class had the opportunity to attend a workshop by Dr. Carlos Abril. Dr. Abril explored a variety of techniques used to teach elementary students about the basic elements of music such as rhythm, melody and dynamics. Each exercise provided a segway into another exercise. The concepts kept building upon each other until we got to the heart of the exercise and we realized the element of music Dr. Abril was trying to teach us. The techniques were interesting and engaging. I love attending these workshops because every workshop is so unique. Additionally, I always find that the exercises are fun and make students think they are playing games instead of learning.

An interesting concept that I learned about today is the Dalcroze Eurhythmics. Carnegie University defines it as “a process for awakening, developing and refining innate musicality through rhythmic movement, ear-training and improvisation”. Although we have been learning about exercises through this method, today was the first time I heard the formal term that embodies these concepts. It made me realize that I would like to learn about various music education theorists and their pedagogy. I did not realize that it takes much more than being an excellent musician to teach a music class.

During Dr. Abril’s workshop, he taught us everything through a series of aural activities. I found this very engaging because it forced us to be attentive so that we wouldn’t miss any of his instructions. Looking back upon the guest lecturers we have heard, they have all stressed aural exercises. However, this was never something stressed in my music education and I feel that it is a really important skill to have. I think if I had learned the basic elements of music through aural techniques at a very young age I would have been a stronger student in subjects such as dictation, sight singing and keyboard harmony.

Another aspect of Dr. Abril’s workshop that I liked was that he gave us room to express creativity. However, he did this in an organized manner so that he would still have control over the classroom and things would not break into chaos. Dr. Abril showed us a picture and got us to provide our interpretation of the picture through sounds and body percussion. It was a great way to explore the concept of composition for a group of elementary school music students.

The last aspect of Dr. Abril’s workshop that I enjoyed was the emphasis on the connection between the body and mind. This has also been stressed in previous lectures and truly provides a deeper connection. It allows you to internalize the music. My favourite part of the workshop was when Dr. Abril led an exercise on listening to the larger ensemble. He asked us to close our eyes and gave us three instructions. The first was to sing a note, the second was to match a note we hear around us and then finally to relate to another note we hear. This experience was magical and truly allowed me to listen to the entire group. It made me wonder how this exercise would play out in a choral setting. It would truly be an interesting way to achieve balance and blend.

To conclude, Dr. Abril's presentation was both engaging and informative. He took us through various aural exercises that were interactive and got us to explore basic elements of music such as melody, harmony and dynamics, as well as other musical aspects such as composition and the relationship between the individual and the rest of the ensemble. I'm glad I had the opportunity to hear him speak.