

Worcester Central School

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Our elementary school just had the wonderful opportunity to work with Bells and Motley Consort in a Chinese Cultural Arts residency entitled "Bawshou and the Dragon: A Traditional Chinese Tale of Heroism and Wonder." Sondra and John Bromka are accomplished musicians, fine artists, and seasoned educators who provide extensive and thoroughly integrated learning experiences for students of all ages, in all disciplines.

This year, their 3-day residency focused upon preparing our core group of 21 3rd Grade students to present a culminating musical theater performance about the Chinese hero Bawshou. During the first 2 days, students became deeply engaged in Chinese culture, discussing the meaning of symbolic Chinese Art, creating calligraphed lanterns, and designing fantastical dragon masks to wear in their performance. The performance was a thoroughly collaborative effort, with the students interpreting the story along with the artists through dance, movement, dramatic roles, singing, and the playing of musical instruments.

On the finale day, our 3rd graders were each assigned a dramatic role, and spent the morning rehearsing for presentation as an assembly for all of our pre-K to 6th students that same afternoon, complete with costumes, props, songs, and dances, including a lantern dance and star dance choreographed by the students. The joy and sense of accomplishment felt by both the student performers as well as the artists was palpable in the performance space. The audience was entranced, the children in the audience riveted on their peers and the wonder of the story. The teachers all agree that it was indeed a privilege to work with these two talented and special people!

As the school's Elementary music instructor, I contributed by helping to organize the 4th Grade classes to accompany the artists on their recorders for the final performance. I was also able to teach a song to the 1st and 2nd grade classes. All of these musical options were provided in the artists' wonderful Teacher Study Guide. These added experiences helped bring even more children into the final performance, and were part of the well thought plan the Bromkas provide for their work.

This residency truly does meet and fully integrate the all of the new Common Core Standards in Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Math, Music, Art, and Dance! And our experience proved that it truly does reach all students, of all learning styles. More of these events are needed in schools to provide important understanding of the world around us. I fully and whole-heartedly recommend that any school wishing to keep children excited and connected to learning engage John and Sondra Bromka, Bells and Motley Consort during the school year.

Sincerely,

Laura Hamwey

Vocal Music WCS K-12