

Jolly Music

For
KS1 and
Music
teachers

A Case Study



Cheam School Pre-Prep , Newbury, Berkshire

“Jolly Music helps me to unlock my pupil’s musical skills”

Martin Lijinsky, Music Teacher, Cheam School



When I began my teaching career as a piano teacher, I found it a challenge to understand why several of my young pupils failed to grasp what I believed to be simple musical concepts such as steady beat and rhythm. I seemed to spend a great deal of each lesson trying to get them to play in time, yet often they would return for their lesson a week later showing little or no improvement. They often found aural tests (such as finding the pulse of a piece or identifying changes in pitch) difficult, too.

Discovering Kodály

In 2004, I took part in the Certificate in Teaching course (run for music teachers by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music), and it was here that I first encountered the philosophy of Zoltán Kodály. The teacher who led the session was Cyrilla Rowsell, one of the authors of the Jolly Music programme.

This session had an immediate impact on me as I realised that here was the solution to the problems that I was experiencing with my pupils. In order to play well, my pupils needed first to learn basic musical skills including beat, rhythm and pitch, and these skills had to be taught effectively and thoroughly. The Kodály approach shows teachers how to impart these skills in a practical way. From that time onwards, I have dedicated my time to developing myself as a Kodály practitioner.

After spending one year training at the Kodály Institute in Hungary, I took up a teaching post at Cheam School where I have been developing musicianship skills in the children of the Pre-Prep. I began my work in September 2007 and started using the newly published Jolly Music Handbook

(Beginners) with the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children.

Singing as a musical foundation

In my music lessons we use mainly the unaccompanied voice. This helps my pupils to develop not only singing ability, but also the skill of listening – the most vital skill of all, because music is a 100 per cent aural experience. Although we spend most of our time singing, we occasionally use some instruments, such as drums or chime bars, as well. Many very young children cannot sing in tune. It is widely assumed that this means that they cannot

“*Jolly Music feeds the children’s natural desire to perform*”

sing. This is quite wrong; it means only that the child’s musical hearing and listening skills are not yet developed. The Jolly Music approach gives me the tools to help every child develop those skills – not just those to whom singing comes easily.

The constant use of the unaccompanied singing voice means that the children’s listening is fully engaged. As a result, their

intonation (singing ‘in tune’) and pitch-matching skills improve steadily.

Creating young musicians

Right from the start of the Beginners’ book, Jolly Music uses a mixture of traditional children’s songs and games that not only provide a firm basis for group development, but also give the children a chance to perform solo in every lesson. Children love to demonstrate their skills and from the earliest stages, Jolly Music feeds their natural desire to perform in front of their peers. I get solo children to sit on the ‘singing chair’ – just an ordinary classroom chair that we have decorated – and tell them that it will help them to sing really well. This solo work develops confidence and self-assurance, which are important for any musician, but also in many other areas of life. It also allows me to assess the children individually.

Of all the musicianship skills that Kodály taught us to develop in our pupils, perhaps the most important is inner hearing: the ability to hear musical sounds ‘inside your head’, comparable with reading silently or doing mental arithmetic. It’s referred to



Year 1 children learning about timing by doing frog jumps.

in Jolly Music as the ‘thinking voice’ and I work with the children to develop this skill from the start. I have seen great improvements in both individuals and the class as a whole as they learn to use their thinking voices. One of the greatest feelings of satisfaction that I’ve experienced is this continual improvement of accurate singing by children so young.

A well thought-out sequence

Structure is vitally important to good music teaching, and it must be present not only in the individual lesson but across the whole series of lessons. Jolly Music provides this structure in a highly concentrated and well-thought-out way. The lessons progress logically and sequentially throughout the series and everything previously learned is used both to reinforce prior learning and to create new learning opportunities: well-known leading to unknown, familiar leading to the unfamiliar. The structure allows me to spend time patiently on the various elements and concepts being taught. There should be no rush!

Games are an important element in the lessons, and are a perfect example of how the children move from experiencing musical concepts to consciously understanding them. Unconscious learning lays the groundwork for concepts such as rhythm, pulse/beat and pitch so by the time the children are introduced to a concept made conscious, they can easily understand it.

It can take only 30 seconds to make a concept or musical element conscious, but many weeks and months to prepare a secure foundation for that concept. For example, with the nursery children I use many musical games where they perform the beat in different ways, but we may spend two years playing these games and singing songs before I explain the concept of the steady beat. My



Year 3 children show the pitches of a song with hand movements.

pupils have no difficulty with terms such as pulse, rhythm and pitch because they have thoroughly understood the concepts through experience first.

A child-centred approach

Kodály placed a strong emphasis on starting music education early, and he was one of the first music educators to develop a truly child-centred approach to music education, fitting the musical material and the activities to the developmental stage of the child. In the early years, I spend a lot of time on singing games. The children love to play these games

“ The children love to play these games repeatedly ”

repeatedly, so it's easy to incorporate repetition and reinforcement into the lessons.

I use every opportunity to introduce resources to help the children's learning and make the lessons fun. The children can make and use their own puppets to show the pulse of a song. I use hand puppets to demonstrate the difference between high and low pitches, and a ball to help children experience the concept of a strong beat. The Jolly Music books provide ideas and templates, but there is plenty of scope for teachers to come up with their own resources, too.

Every element of the Kodály approach is designed to make the children's learning more effective. For example, the songs that I teach the children use only a small number of pitches. Many so-called ‘children's songs’ have a wide range of pitches, making them physically impossible for children to sing; they often growl or use their speaking voices instead. Young children have a limited vocal range, and in the earliest stages, just two pitches are enough. I have found all of the songs in the Jolly Music programme to be easily singable for the children.

To teachers who are unfamiliar with the approach, it may seem that the rhymes and songs are too short and simple, that they lack melodic variety, or that there is too much repetition.

Experience has shown me that this is not an issue. Provided that the children enjoy the songs and games, and that what they do leads to success, it does not matter if adults think that the material is boring or limited. Adults need to enter the world of the child rather than expecting the child to enter the world of the adult.

In fact, it is quite possible for adults to have great fun becoming children again with these games. This can offer security to young children, who, in my experience, love the games even more when an adult plays with them.

Any teacher can use it

The lesson plans in Jolly Music are very clear and detailed, and I can see it being very accessible for teachers who consider themselves unmusical and might think they are unable to teach the subject. The 'Resources' section in each book makes it possible for Kodály-trained teachers to be more flexible and versatile with the programme, adding to or selecting from the material according to time constraints.

The children's achievement

Because Jolly Music is skills-based, it allows my pupils to acquire a fine repertoire of musicianship skills that can be life-lasting; as they move up through the school, they can develop these skills further through continued Kodály training and other musical activities such as learning an instrument or

participating in a choir or instrumental ensemble.

When I began teaching music at Cheam School, many of the children had little idea of beat and rhythm. Although they were mostly happy to sing, their intonation and pitch-matching skills were not particularly well developed.

My new Year 3 group, to whom I have been teaching music for three years since they were in Reception, are now highly skilled musicians, considering that they are only seven years old. Their skills repertoire includes the following:

- Well-developed musical memories
- Excellent musical literacy skills
- Highly accurate intonation and pitch-matching skills
- Competence in solo singing and performance with a high degree of confidence

- A firm understanding of pulse and rhythm
- Excellent sight-reading skills of rhythm patterns
- An ability to work with pulse (beat) and rhythm polyphonically (that is, to perform both at once)

There is no doubt that the Jolly Music programme has greatly aided their development and it is now very easy for me to identify why my piano pupils of several years ago were struggling with basic musical concepts.

I had to look at myself and my teaching methods in finding this answer; the Jolly Music programme and, central to that, the philosophy of Zoltán Kodály were the keys that unlocked the door for me as a music teacher. I would recommend Jolly Music to anybody wishing to teach music. *Martin can be contacted at martin.lijinsky@ntlworld.com*

"Jolly Music makes our children better learners"

Marion Scott-Baker, Head of Pre-Prep, Cheam School



The quality of music here has always been good but I can now genuinely say that it is outstanding. Parents and visitors are astonished at the quality of the singing and tell us so regularly and enthusiastically.

What is also noticeable is the effect of their music lessons on the children's other skills. One of the major skills that children learn in the Pre-Prep is communication. If children are to be successful in school they need to be able to listen to as well as hear what is being said and to respond to what they hear. Listening is a vital skill in collaborative learning and children listen to each other and problem-solve together.

The explicit expectation in the music lesson that the children will do all these things – listen,

respond and work together on improving their performance – encourages the development of the good learning skills that we are trying to embed across the curriculum.

“What is noticeable is the effect on the children's other skills”

Another area where we have noted an improvement is in the pupils' concentration, both in music lessons and in the classroom. They understand and observe qualities of sounds such as higher and lower or louder and softer. It is a joy to watch our Foundation Stage children unconsciously keeping time with the music as they walk out of assembly. They already 'feel' the beat. They are alert to patterns in

sound and this is a key factor in developing literacy skills as well as musical ones.

Through the many actions and game that go with the songs, the children's co-ordination skills have improved as they have learned about left and right, to clap patterns and to cross the midline (that is, reach one hand or foot across to the other side of the body). Regular opportunities to develop these co-ordination skills have a knock-on effect in gross and fine motor skill development across the curriculum.

Above all, the confidence of the children is amazing. They perceive themselves as 'singers'. They enjoy performing and are confident that they can do it well. The singing doesn't just happen, they know how to sing.

“A wonderful start to the children’s musical journey”

Tim Bennett, Director of Music, Cheam School



We have been on the most incredible journey with the younger children at Cheam. Using the wonderful resource of Jolly Music, pupils from our Nursery to Year 4 have experienced the most amazing start to their musical careers.

We have been blessed with a dynamic enthusiast of the Kodály methodology as their teacher and the opportunity to devote the entire music curriculum time to this project. Martin Lijinsky has worked with each class either once or twice a week for a 30-minute session depending on their age group. The results are staggering and yet the children continue to surprise us with their musical development and confidence.

They have really enjoyed using Jolly Music. The resource, underpinned by the inspirational educational philosophy of Zoltán Kodály, has enabled them to discover and develop their singing voices. Through the simple repetitive use of unaccompanied rhymes, songs, games and folk song material they have all developed an accurate sense of pitch awareness. Their understanding of rhythm and their strong sense of pulse have also impressed me. These skills form such a critical basis for future musical development and all the children who have undertaken the course at Cheam School have a very secure grounding. They are excited by enjoying their musical education and have begun to feel music within their heart and soul through the use of inner hearing and improved musical memory.

The older children are now beginning to start individual instrumental studies and already we are experiencing faster initial progress and enjoyment of these instruments because of their advanced skills in pitch, pulse and notation.

There can be no doubt that the carefully planned

programme of activities presented in Jolly Music offers all children the most outstanding start to their musical studies.

I would encourage any teacher, music specialist or non-specialist to have a go. This is not a programme you can dabble with, but if you are prepared to invest time and enthusiasm on this single course of study you will be amazed by the reactions from the children, parents and staff!

We are certainly thrilled at Cheam and look forward to watching these children blossom as musicians as they pass through the school. Martin has the great pleasure of introducing new groups of young children to Jolly Music with the certain knowledge that he is beginning them on this incredible musical journey too!

A Year 1 child working with simplified musical notation.



My children and Jolly Music

Angela Harris, mother of two pupils at Cheam School



My daughters – Arabella, aged 8, and Sophie, aged 7 – have gained much from the teaching of Jolly Music at Cheam School over the past four years. From a very young age, they were exposed to nursery rhymes at home and in the car, but definitely became more musically aware when they started their music lessons at school. From the age of five, they

have both been enthusiastic singers who enjoy learning and performing new songs and actions. Much of what they have been taught has ‘rubbed off’ on their younger brother Charlie, who joins in at home in much of what they have learnt at school! It has amazed me how quickly they seem to learn new rhythms and rhymes and how such musical

enthusiasm has further developed their self-confidence and willingness to perform in public. Now in Years 2 and 4, they are passionate about their music and keen to progress further. As a result, both of them are learning the piano with a view to picking up a second instrument in the not-too-distant future.

About the Kodály approach

The Kodály approach to music education was developed by Hungarian composer, educator and ethnomusicologist Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967). Kodály became interested in music education when he found that many of his students at the Liszt Academy, although advanced instrumentalists, lacked basic musicianship skills. He incorporated into his approach some ideas that were already in use, such as rhythm names (speaking rhythms using syllables such as *ta* and *titi* for the different note durations), solfa names (the scale names *do, re, mi* etc.) and handsigns (to show the notes of the scale), and he drew on the work of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865–1950) in using rhythmic movement. His approach can be used from early childhood up to professional level.

From unconscious to conscious

Kodály's approach is a child-developmental one; all the activities are suited to the child's abilities. He recognised three stages of learning: unconscious experience, making conscious and reinforcement (or preparation, presentation and practice). In Kodály lessons children learn many songs and rhymes, initially by imitation. Gradually what they have assimilated unconsciously is made conscious and they learn



Reception children tap the pulse as they listen to a song.

both the appropriate vocabulary to describe their experience and the symbol that represents it. The teaching is structured so that students progress from the simple to the complex in a series of logical steps. The steps are very small so that success is guaranteed.

Most of the repertoire consists of children's singing games. Many of these originated in the street and playground, and children of all ages love them. At a later stage, composed songs and art music are also used.

Why the voice?

The voice is the primary instrument used. Singing is the most direct way of making a musical response; anything learned through singing (and therefore through the body) is learned more thoroughly and deeply. Singing is also vital for

“ Students progress from the simple to the complex... The steps are very small so that success is guaranteed.”

developing that essential part of a musician, the inner hearing. It is not possible to sing anything that has not first been imagined in the inner ear; singing therefore proves that the music has been assimilated and understood.

The songs used in the early stages have a small range and simple rhythms. Many of the games and activities encourage solo singing, which is helpful for the teacher's assessment as well as breeding confidence in the child. Growlers gradually learn to pitch accurately by singing on their own and imitating the teacher's voice.

Pentatonic music (based on a simplified five-note scale using only *do, re, mi, so* and *la*) is used initially, as singing with good intonation is easier without semi-

tones. (A semitone is the smallest interval in western music, the distance between *ti* and *do* in the scale.) Two-part work is an important part of the training; when two people sing together without accompaniment, they listen more closely and tune with each other. In this way they improve their perception and understanding of how the music is constructed.

From sound to symbol

In Kodály classes, children learn musical literacy by moving in a natural sequence from sound to symbol. They first experience pulse (or beat), then rhythm (the pattern of short and long notes) and are taught to differentiate between the two; they are then introduced to rhythm names and learn to read rhythms from symbols. An awareness of pitch (moving higher or lower, staying the same) is developed before the children begin solfa training, and new pitches are introduced gradually. Solfa is learned with accompanying hand signs, which provide a physical link with the sound. Hand signs are powerful tools in that the children can also read from them, thus quickly and easily learning new music or recognising known material.

Children learn to read and write music initially with simplified versions of notation (see photo on page 5, for example). From using rhythm symbols with solfa names underneath, they then move on to conventional notation, with letter names introduced gradually.

We would not attempt to teach a child to read before it could speak. But this is precisely what happens to many young instrumentalists. Kodály taught us that children have to learn musical skills before they attempt to play an instrument: 'before we rear instrumentalists... we must first rear musicians.'

With thanks to Cyrilla Rowsell and Gillian Earl



Teach music skills in a fun and effective way with Jolly Music!

What is Jolly Music?

Based on the tried-and-tested principles of Hungarian composer and music educator Zoltán Kodály, *Jolly Music* is a structured and progressive programme for teaching music skills to children. The approach is multi-sensory, with all the teaching done through singing. This enables children to become instant music makers without the need to learn how to play an instrument.

The lesson plans are beautifully crafted... Lucky the children who are brought through this process.

Fun and easy to use, both by specialist and non-specialist teachers... No school should be without it

Make music more of a feature in your classroom

Jolly Music has been developed so that any teacher can teach music in school, even those with little or no musical experience. It offers clear step-by-step lesson plans as well as accompanying CDs for additional support, giving teachers the confidence to deliver an enjoyable music lesson to their class.

How does Jolly Music work?

Through a repertoire based on playground rhymes and songs, children become aware of musical elements including pulse, rhythm, pitch, loudness and speed. Activities and games support multi-sensory learning and make the lesson fun. Each lesson is carefully structured to build the key skills of listening, singing in tune, inner hearing and, ultimately, musical literacy.

What a difference Jolly Music makes! It's a delight to see the children singing and tapping out beats, even those who are normally shy



About the authors

Cyrilla

Rowsell spent eleven years as a primary teacher before specialising in music education and is now one of the most experienced Kodály practitioners in the UK. She is in great demand not only as a teacher, but also as a trainer and adviser to schools, education authorities and organisations



such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music in London. Currently Cyrilla teaches in a state primary school and at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.

David Vinden is in demand the world over as a leading Kodály exponent. Educated at the Royal Academy of Music,



London, and London University, David taught for six years before studying at the Kodály Institute in Hungary. He was director of The Purcell School until 1995. Subsequently he has lectured at Birmingham Conservatoire and currently lectures at Trinity College of Music and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. He and his wife co-founded the Kodály Centre of London in 1992.

The Music Handbooks – all you need to get started

Each handbook contains 30 clearly structure lesson plans (enough for one year), a Resources section with songs, rhymes, actions and game, a photocopiable child assessment record, and templates for lesson materials.

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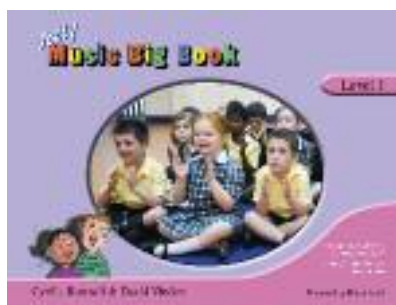
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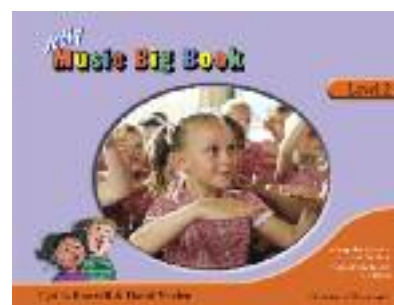
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