

THE UNSUNG VALUES OF KODÁLY INSTRUCTION

As I stand here today I recall my circumstances some twenty five years ago. I was a graduate student and research fellow at the University of Iowa studying the psychology of music. Although the name Zoltán Kodály appeared rarely, if at all, in the research literature I was reading, it was becoming more and more frequent in conversation, particularly among music teachers. I listened and read what I could find. It did not take long for me to realize that Zoltán Kodály was a music psychologist and a very good one. He was one of those rare persons who are able to combine superior musicianship with wisdom in a quest for a better understanding of the pedagogical processes in music. Kodály's research was not experimental; it was applied. Nonetheless the value of his work and his intuition about how children learn music are comparable to Sigmund Freud's stunning analyses of how the human mind functions. Freud demonstrated insight whereas Kodály demonstrated, to coin a word, "insound". My admiration for Kodály grew and I wished that I had the means to meet him and discuss the psychology of music. I had come to learn that in experimental research, answers are of far less consequence than good questions. Unfortunately for me, I never met Zoltán Kodály; he did, however, have a pronounced effect on my research. I am sharing these thoughts simply to express my excitement and gratitude for the honor bestowed upon me, in being invited to be the keynote speaker at this Seventh Annual Conference of American Kodály Educators. Twenty five years ago the possibility that leaders in the Kodály movement would be interested in my research findings never entered my mind. I am proud to be here. During the next forty minutes and throughout the sessions I will be conducting during this conference, I shall do my best to do homage to the tradition of Zoltán Kodály.

To understand the impact of the Kodály method on music education in the United States, we must begin with the introduction of music into the public schools of Boston during the first part of the nineteenth century. There had been singing schools long before this time and Lowell Mason's Juvenile Choir had sung in public concerts as early as 1832. The success of Mason's work helped to dissuade many from the popular belief

that there is "only here and there a musical ear". History relates that Mason finally convinced the Boston Board of Education in 1837 to include music in the public school curriculum, and then named him as the first supervisor of music in the country. Mason developed seven principles, which are based on Pestalozzian philosophy, for his teachers. Allow me to read the first and fifth principles as they appeared in his Manual of Instruction. "To teach sounds before signs-to make the child sing before he learns the written notes or their names." And "To give the principles and theory after practice, as an induction from it." The same principles, in addition to others, of course, are found in the Kodály method, which emerged in Hungary approximately one hundred years later and then was introduced into the United States on a grand scale some twenty years after that. It is clear that both Mason and Kodály were music educators who were not interested only in the psychology of music but, more specifically, they were interested also in learning theory as it applies to music. One cannot help wondering if Mason's principles were followed for long or if they were ever followed at all. Certainly music education in the United States at least as far back as the end of the nineteenth century up through World War II did not reflect those principles. True, they might have been accepted as a philosophy of music education by the professorial nobility of the profession but they were practiced little, if at all, by the practitioner-masses; they were either not understood because of a lack of musicianship or were ignored through fear of the naked simplicity of their truth. Possibly Mason was breaking one of his own rules by giving the principles and theory of music education before the practice of music to those who he thought were musical. As an astute observer of the human condition once commented. "most men occasionally stumble over the truth by accident but they quickly get up, brush themselves off, and continue merrily on their way".

Probably the most precious gift Kodály gave music educators in the United States was the impetus to reconsider principles of music learning in an intelligent, non-threatening, manner; it was not possible for a sensitive and thoughtful music educator to deny the practical validity of the Kodály method. Conscience, not accountability

as we know of it today, forced the issue. I will examine with you some of the principles of Kodály instruction that make the Kodály method commendable. Because it takes integrity to make a profession a discipline, those principles will endure. They should ensure the continued respect and use of the Kodály method throughout the world.

Kodály transferred the ideas of Pestalozzi and Rousseau to music education. Further, the direction he set forth for music education gives evidence of his familiarity with the works of Piaget and Montessori. There were some before him who made similar attempts, but they paled in comparison with his achievement. Kodály had the integrity and the musicianship, the statesmanship if you will, to know what was correct, and he did not allow himself to know compromise. Kodály supported the idea that method in music education should emanate from what researchers know about child development, and not from what adults believe children should know about music. Children are not little adults. Children do not learn the way most adults think that they learn. Fortunately, children do not learn like adults. If they tried to do so, they would not learn anything except how not to learn. Children excel in rote learning, whereas adults excel in inference learning. However, without rote learning in the early years to serve as a readiness, generalization cannot take place in the later years. To the same extent that we, as adults, no longer have the strength of capacity for rote learning as we had as children, children do not acquire the strength of capacity for inference learning until their capacity for rote learning is considerably weak. And is there one among us who can remember how he learned from birth through age three? If that riddle were solved, specifically, to know how we, as young children, broke the code of the English language, teachers might learn to teach children in accordance with the way children think.

Probably because he was a superb musician, Kodály was able to put the theory of music in its proper perspective in the music education of children. For Kodály, the theory of music is appropriately taught to children after they have developed the ability to perform music. For a child to learn to speak his first language, he must learn sound before he is taught the written symbols which represent sound in that language. It is

for that reason that we should all be grateful that young children do not naturally learn to speak their first language within the walls of the schoolhouse. If they did we should all be stutterers, though we might be able to decline verbs and to read words which have no meaning for us. For a child to learn music, he must learn sound before the written symbol. That is, he should learn how to perform music before he is taught what is commonly referred to as the theory of music. Unfortunately, this is usually not the case. In the United States most young children receive their initial instruction in music within the schoolhouse walls. In most schools, singing in tune, with expressive tone quality and dynamics and with good rhythm, is secondary to memorizing key signatures, identifying half steps and whole steps on the staff, and fractionating note values as if children were learning arithmetic rather than music. It is not surprising that a majority of persons in our society are musically illiterate. The Kodály method may be credited with making progress toward mitigating this intolerable situation.

Literacy in language includes speaking, and literacy in music includes performance. One appropriately first learns to perform music, then to read and write music, and only then to "theorize" about music. Kodály was aware, though often too sensitive and well-mannered to mention the fact, that just as there are many persons who speak a language but do not make sense, so there are many persons who sing and play but do not make music. Thus Kodály had to be sure that when children perform, they perform musically. With appropriate instruction, children quickly learn that music is an aural art. They also learn that what is basic to music as an aural art is quality of tone. For one to perform music without concern for quality of tone is as rude and serious an offense to a musician as for one to speak without saying anything is torturous to a thinker. Kodály was successful in protecting children from the ignominious fate of musically having to say something rather than having something to say musically. Thus for Kodály, performance, tone quality, and expression serve in the pedagogical process. Kodály knew also that tone quality and expression in music cannot be learned apart from good literature. How refreshing it is to know that Kodály was secure enough to admit that folk music is not

only appropriate literature for children to perform, but also, along with art music, good literature. Teachers who teach music, teach folk music. Teachers who teach about music, teach about what they need others to tell them is good music. I know Kodály would have been pleased with Louie Armstrong's response to the question: "Isn't jazz only folk music"? His answer was, "When did you last hear a horse sing"?

Kodály was instrumental in reminding music educators that when we listen to music, read and write music, and improvise and create music, we do so with tonal patterns and rhythm patterns. As a result of his efforts, more and more music educators are teaching children tonal patterns instead of attempting to have them discriminate isolated pitches apart from a musical context, and they are teaching children rhythm patterns instead of having them memorize the time value names of isolated notes in symbolic form. A few music educators who predate Kodály's influence recognized the importance of tonal patterns to music instruction, but almost none knew of the importance of rhythm patterns to music instruction except possibly in terms of eurhythmics and mnemonics. It remained for Kodály to demonstrate the transition from eurhythmics to music performance in music education.

It is important to emphasize, because it goes so easily unnoticed, that in the Kodály method, a tonal pattern is not taught with rhythm, nor is a rhythm pattern taught with melody after either is taken from a song for instructional purposes. Children best learn tonal patterns without rhythm and rhythm patterns without melody. Although adults will combine tonal and rhythm patterns as they attend to music, if they combine the two types of patterns with music intelligence, they learned the two types of patterns independent of each other and probably through unconscious self-instruction. For children to mature into adult musicians who attend to tonal and rhythm patterns concurrently, they must learn the two types of patterns separately. Kodály knew instinctively, if not through formal instruction, that retroactive and proactive inhibitions are potent factors in preventing positive learning. I wonder if he would be discouraged if he were to see this learning principle so blatantly violated more as a result of ignorance than of

honest disagreement in current music education practice. If he were, he would also be disappointed in researchers who have not learned the discipline of clearly reporting their findings in regard to this and other equally important matters.

It has always seemed a curious fact to me that although Guido recognized the need for tonal syllables in the eleventh century, it was not until the nineteenth century that Chevé became aware of the parallel need for rhythm syllables. And not as curious as it is startling to me is that most music educators today still do not recognize the value of rhythm syllables. It took the wisdom of Kodály to comprehend the value of rhythm syllables, as he did earlier the value of the movable do tonal syllables. Kodály adapted the Chevé syllables so that they would be of use to children in Hungary. And, of course, he devised a pre-notational technique for reading and writing rhythm patterns which is based on rhythm syllables. Even if Kodály had made no other contribution to music education, he deserves an accolade for making the profession aware of the importance of rhythm patterns. Had he been a contemporary of Guido, he probably would have seen immediately the need for some type of rhythm syllables, and it is conceivable that music teachers by this time would be embracing his ideas not only about rhythm patterns, but also about rhythm syllables. It is ironic that Kodály was successful in making music educators understand the value of rhythm patterns but not rhythm syllables. Though it may be an overstatement, it seems that the use of rhythm syllables is restricted to Kodály teachers. How sad that is. Only too often upon entering a typical school do we hear the time keeping ritual of 1 e an da being imposed upon instrumental music students who probably have never used their bodies to respond to rhythm; and we hear the names of friends and cities, and even the names of pies being smiled at children in a general music class in an attempt to inspire self-confidence and a good attitude toward music in them. In most cases the children already have a good attitude toward music; they have a bad attitude only toward school music. Maybe it will be one among you who will finally bring an understanding of the importance of rhythm syllables to the music education profession.

The Kodály legacy teaches us that music literacy is the intelligent communication of music through performance as well as through the reading and writing of music. Kodály well understood that truly to read music, one must have inner hearing, as he called it, of what is seen in notation. And how can one better develop inner hearing than through performance? When will it become common knowledge that the ability to name lines and spaces of the staff, to memorize note values, to recite key signatures, to define a measure signature, to recognize half steps in a notated diatonic scale, and so on, do not constitute music literacy? That kind of information, as useless as crossword puzzles, has been taught for years, and, as should have been expected, music literacy has all but atrophied.

Of course music literacy was endorsed by many of Kodály's predecessors, including Lowell Mason, in the United States and other countries. Why is it then that so many persons, regardless of age, in our society are musically illiterate? Is it because most music educators do not understand learning theory in music as outlined in the Kodály method? Do they unwittingly attempt to teach symbols before sound, and, as a result, preclude the possibility of allowing their students to develop music literacy? We are in Kodály's debt for many things. Paramount among them is that he has forced to the surface the fact that every child can learn music to some degree. What better way is there to acknowledge Kodály's contributions than by educating our peers to the sequential importance of teaching children to perform, then to commit tonal patterns and rhythm patterns to inner hearing, then to associate tonal syllables and rhythm syllables with tonal patterns and rhythm patterns, and finally to associate tonal syllables and rhythm syllables with notation. Such a sequence produces music literacy. Anything less than that sequence ethically cannot be substituted for music literacy.

Kodály would not, of course, feel that anyone owes him anything. He did what he had to do; it was the universally correct thing to do. He knew that it was only because of the cooperation of the master teachers who worked with him that his ideas came to fruition in terms of practical application. Beyond his integrity in music, he loved

children and considered them our most precious resource. The quality of the education of the child determines the quality of thinking of the adult. Without music in the education of the child, the adult becomes less sensitive to aesthetics and less sensitive toward human beings. It is primarily through the arts that one may gain insight into himself. Without appropriate music education for the child, civilization suffers. The child is father of the man. In tribute to Zoltán Kodály and in respect for ourselves, let us share our experiences and research so that the Kodály tradition may be best carried forth. To see devoted teachers increase their understanding of how to teach music to children would please him very much. It is in the spirit of an advocate, not an adversary, that I offer the following observations and thoughts.

In Zoltán Kodály: His Life and Work by László Eöszé, translated by Istvan Farkas and Gyula Gulyás, Kodály is quoted from his book Pentatonic Music: "It is easier to sing true without semitones." To the extent that the statement is an accurate translation, it is deceptively significant. In essence, it lays the foundation for the Kodály method. Students being educated in the Kodály tradition sing songs in many tonalities: major, minor, dorian, mixolydian, and so on. However, when they are first introduced to tonal patterns, they sing only those which are pentatonic. Allegedly, students are introduced to pentatonic patterns before diatonic patterns because the half step is absent in pentatonic music; and thus pentatonic patterns are easier to sing. After tonal patterns which comprise only intervals larger than a half step are sung in tune, then students may be introduced to tonal patterns which comprise half steps. Although it is difficult to separate quality of tone from intonation functions, it would seem that to delay the teaching of diatonic patterns represents, in my view, a reflex reaction rather than a thoughtful one to the issue. Nonetheless, the solution to the problem is actually more complex than the problem. Therein, I believe, lies the important concern. Specifically, my research over the past ten years with children nine years old and older has demonstrated consistently that the half step, in itself comprising a two-tone pattern and particularly when it is part of a three-tone, four-tone, and five-tone pattern, is more

often than not easier to audiate than a pattern which includes only intervals larger than a half step; moreover, such half step patterns are quite often easier to audiate than a descending minor third pattern which corresponds to so mi. I use the word audiation to indicate what Kodály referred to as inner hearing. Further, in my observation of children in spontaneous play, I find that the half step is performed no less in tune than any other interval, including the descending minor third. I am asking whether children should really be taught pentatonic patterns before diatonic patterns or whether they may be taught diatonic patterns before pentatonic patterns not only safely but with positive results. There is evidence in doctoral research at Temple University which suggests that pentatonic and diatonic tonal patterns should be taught concurrently in initial instruction. There is a related question that I also ask: Is preoccupation with intervals rather than concern for tonal patterns as they relate to tonality justified? One three-tone pattern may be more difficult than another even though both include a half step. And the same three-tone pattern in different tonalities usually represents different levels of difficulty.

Kodály was a nationalist. It is conceivable to me that Kodály recommended pentatonic patterns as initial material for children not because of the exclusion of the half step, but rather because Hungarian children's folk music is primarily pentatonic. Though Kodály may have been convinced of the difficulty of the half step, particularly in regard to producing good tone quality in singing, I do not believe that he would advise teachers who use the Kodály method in other countries not to permit their beginning students to sing patterns found in the folk music of their countries because of the occurrence of the half step. Kodály implied that other intervals are easier to sing than a half step, but he never stated, to the best of my knowledge, that a half step is too difficult for children to sing; that belief has been inferred by the teachers.

A related matter has to do with meter. Students in the Kodály method initially deal almost exclusively with rhythm patterns in duple meter. Again, I believe that this is done more as a result of the content of Hungarian children's folk music than of

pedagogical principles. The results of my studies clearly indicate that children audiate and perform triple meter patterns as well as, if not better than, they do duple meter patterns. I know of no statement by Kodaly that students should not initially be taught triple meter patterns. It occurs to me that if Kodaly were here today, he would probably advise us to teach pentatonic and diatonic tonal patterns concurrently and duple and triple meter patterns concurrently. The matter deserves serious consideration, because if we adhere strictly to pentatonic tonal patterns and duple meter patterns, the patterns themselves, rather than tonalities and meters as they relate to form and style in music, become the bases for curriculum development.

I have concluded from my research that children find syntax in music, and that syntax is based on a sense of tonality and a sense of meter. With a sense of tonality, a child continuously audiates the resting tone of the mode in which he is singing. The resting tone is a half step apart from the leading tone in major and harmonic minor tonalities. It is precisely that relationship which contributes to the recognition and identification of a resting tone. To best discriminate among modes, a child should sing patterns in those modes. Pentatonic does not have a leading tone, and thus, from my point of view, it cannot contribute to the development of a sense of tonality. A sense of tonality for pentatonic is dependent upon a sense of tonality for at least major and harmonic minor. If that is the case, why not introduce children to patterns in major and harmonic minor tonalities to begin with, so that the most efficient use of time can be made in the early years? There is no doubt that the younger a child is, the more he can learn by rote; and the more he learns when he is young, the more he is able to learn through inference as he grows older. Like maturity, a sense of tonality is not developed once and for all at a given time in a child's life; the concepts must be introduced early in life and consistently attended to throughout life. I feel certain that there is not one among us who would delay what children learn during the first three years of life as they pass through the language babble stage. Yet we may be delaying what children should be learning during the first six to eight years of life as they pass through the "music babble" stage.

These issues are of special concern to me. I do not feel that their importance can be overstated, and I do believe that they should command our attention until we are all satisfied that they have been dealt with in a thorough manner. As we reason through the problems, we should keep in mind that Kodály's conclusions were based upon children's performance skill, whereas my conclusions are based upon children's audiation skill. I am of the opinion that for a child to sing a pattern in tune, he must audiate the pattern in tune. That, I believe, would be difficult to deny. What appears to be difficult to defend is the belief that a child can sing every pattern in tune that he audiates in tune providing it is sung in a proper tessitura. My research suggests that if a child can audiate a pattern, he can perform that pattern. Nonetheless, we are all sullied by prejudice, and research bearing on the matter is long overdue.

I would like to address myself to some additional topics. I consider them all as important as what has been discussed thus far, but time does not permit much elaboration. I have spoken of Kodály's contribution in terms of rhythm syllables. I did not mention the names of the syllables; I alluded only to the value of their logic. A word or two may be in order about how the syllable names are derived. The principle syllable names correspond to note values. In 2/4, for example, two quarter notes are ta ta whereas four eighth notes are ti ti ti ti. Thus when kinesthetically reacting to music, a child who does not have this information may become confused because the same syllable is not always used for the same type of beat. The emphasis is on notation, not on audiation. The matter becomes more complicated for the child as more meters are introduced, because regardless of the function of a note in a meter, it is given the same syllable as any other note of that value. Tempo beats, meter beats, and melodic rhythm represent different functions in rhythm. I would like to persuade you that syllable names should be applied on the basis of rhythmic functions. A related issue which applies primarily to tonal syllables, sometimes abbreviated, but also to rhythm syllables is that children in the Kodály method are often taught to read syllables. I question the wisdom of this practice. There is a difference between a sign and a symbol. A sign is something and a symbol represents something.

During the conference, The Role of Music Education, held in Kodaly's honor at the University of California in 1966, he said "...music is not a toy for a very few selected people." Kodaly was speaking against a view held by many musicians and music educators. He was aware of the consequences of their adhering to such an unfounded belief. Regardless of a child's level of overall music aptitude, he can attain some level of musicianship. It is simply a matter of adapting instruction to the individual musical differences among children in the classroom. Moreover, in addition to the normative musical differences among children, there are idiographic musical differences within each child. With rare exceptions, a child does not, for example, have the same degree of tonal aptitude and rhythm aptitude. Thus instruction must also be adapted to take into account the musical differences within each child. Only thus can we be sure that music will not be a toy for a privileged few. I am suggesting that a systematic testing procedure for measuring and evaluating each child's music aptitudes be established as a concomitant part of the Kodaly method. There is developmental music aptitude which is manifest in children eight years old and younger, and there is stabilized music aptitude which is manifest in children nine years old and older. The appropriate types of tests must be administered. Imagine the number of children who possess substantially high music aptitudes, that is, potential for music achievement, who have not been given the opportunity and the appropriate instruction to achieve in music. To identify such children and to ensure that they receive appropriate instruction in the Kodaly method would be important accomplishments. How necessary it is to concentrate on those efforts rather than to continue to try in vain to convince bureaucrats that music education contributes to the reading, writing, and arithmetic achievement of children. Do we dare forsake Kodaly and not teach music for music's sake alone? Gentle as he was, I do not think that he would foregive us. Ancillary to this is the need for developing music achievement tests which are specifically designed to measure each child's music development in terms of Kodaly objectives. The effect of the use of such a battery of music aptitude and music achievement tests would be unparalleled in the profession.

There is one more matter I should like to mention. The traditional Kodály method is excellent for the material it covers. Unfortunately, it does not include creativity and improvisation. I am heartened by the emergence of interest on the part of some Kodály teachers in creativity and improvisation. I hope that they will give the same care and attention to developing those abilities in the child as Kodály himself would have given. I say this because I have observed some Kodály teachers who borrowed ideas on creativity from other so-called methods which do not, in fact, engender creative learning. There seems to be no articulation between what those teachers are teaching in terms of the Kodály method and what they are trying to teach in terms of creativity. Too frequently what is labeled as creativity is mere exploration. Further, there is a difference between creativity and improvisation. In creativity, the child is encouraged to give free, but thoughtful, musical responses. In improvisation, the child is directed in giving a response within pre-planned limits. I have found in my research that the difference in creativity and improvisation is greater than initially meets the eye, or, I should say, the ear. Certainly research is required to determine which type of learning: creativity or improvisation, should precede the other in the instructional program. I feel sure that Kodály would support the idea that the curriculum he proposed should take on new dimensions once students have demonstrated music literacy.

I appreciate your attention and the kindness you have shown me. I feel comfortable among you. The more I become acquainted with Kodály people, the more I not only respect them, particularly for their integrity and ability to think, but like them. I hope that together we can improve the quality of music education. Zoltán Kodály would indeed be proud of all of you.

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March, 1981
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