“Music is one of the most powerful forces in the rise of mankind. He who renders it accessible to as many people as possible is a benefactor of humanity.”

Zoltán Kodály (Hungarian Music Educator)

“Colourstrings Music Kindergartens have a great deal to offer young children from the very early stages of their development”

Introduction

Colourstrings Music Kindergartens offer young children the opportunity to cultivate a love of music making and singing at each stage of their development. They also benefit from unconscious and enjoyable learning of musical components such as pulse, rhythm, pitch, inner hearing, melody, tempo, dynamics, character, form and style in a very structured way. During the Kindergarten years, some of these musical concepts gradually will transform into musical skills, building up to musicianship later in their life. Kindergarten classes start at babyhood and carry on up to age 4. Much research into the development during a baby's early years shows that it has an impact later in life; these years are recognised as the most vital stage of a human being's learning potential and development. Research suggests that hearing is well-developed before birth. Results from research by Hepper 1991 indicate that the learning and remembering of a melody can occur not only before birth but before or at the beginning of the third trimester.(10)

In addition, it is emphasised that along with the importance of the development of the children's musicianship, it is equally important to take into account the holistic development of each child as an individual. This Colourstrings principal reflects “Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs model, which may be used to clearly explain the needs of children at various stages of their development. Understanding Maslow's hierarchy of needs may be utilised as a means of helping provide those working in the Early Years profession with a greater awareness of the importance of identifying and meeting the different holistic needs of the child.” (31)

Discussion

According to the Grove Concise Dictionary of Music, the definition of the „Kodály Method” is:

“A way of training children in music, devised by Zoltán Kodály, which is based on giving them a thorough grounding in solfeggio (using a ‘movable doh’ system), aimed at developing aural ability with emphasis on sight-singing, dictation and the reading and writing of music; a progressive repertory of songs and exercises, based on Hungarian folk music, is used.” (9) The main characteristic of the work of Kodály is the use of singing. Kodály believed singing was the best medium for teaching the language of music. Singing actively engages the whole person and develops that essential musical attribute, the inner hearing. (20) Singing is fundamental to mankind, everyone has a voice and it is free. Our instruments can be seen as an extension of our ability as humans to sing, so for Kodály it was right to start from the basics. If you can sing something correctly then you can play it. Singing makes that essential connection with the “Inner Hearing” ...that most vital aspect of any musician. Singing should be developed through using only the best material, children’s songs, games, and folk songs as well as good art material …only the best is good enough. Regular exposure to music is essential and lessons should be fun, going from the known to the unknown and from the simple to the more complex by logical steps. Unaccompanied singing is better because the ear can really develop fine tuning. The tempered (or tampered) tuning of the piano can dull our ears and can become a crutch so that children never sing without it. (20)
The scientist Bruce Richman believes that humans essentially use three different forms of vocal expression: 1. laughing, sighing, crying and tutting 2. speech 3.singing. He believes that singing served as an evolutionary transitional state between primate–like vocalizations and speech. In other words, it’s how we learned to communicate. Before children can talk, parents communicate using sing-song language and this musical communication helps to develop the child’s language skills.” (21)

The Colourstrings approach embraces these Kodály principles and places singing in the heart of the kindergarten sessions where teachers and the group of children with their carers/families spend 30-45 minute sessions with singing and actively making music together. Sharing these activities could contribute fulfilling of the “Belongingness and Love needs” (level 3) through of Maslow’s needs and delivering the holistic approach in teaching:

- **work groups** (sessions combined group and individual work, children feel part of a group that has a special purpose and it is a safe and stimulating learning environment), and
- **family** (family members or carers are encouraged to take part in sessions, home singing is promoted).
- **affection**: love of music is promoted, acceptance and respect of others are promoted through the sessions). (12,30,31,32)

The core repertoire is the “Singing Rascals” series (5 books containing over 50 carefully selected songs including some of Kodály’s own songs) which encourages the parent/carer to sing to their baby, toddler or child in the class and at home. Eventually, through repeated use, the child will begin to sing along. The first book in the series is based upon the pentatonic scale. The first song is “Look Lamb” a two-note song over the interval of a minor third, with simple rhythm. Kodály’s research suggests that this is the first interval that Western children can accurately hear and sing in tune. ‘The distinctive shape of the pentatone, d r m s l, in which any of the sounds can be the final, makes it easier to acquire tonal orientation. Also, tunes without semitones are easier to sing in tune.’ (11)

The Colourstrings Music Kindergarten repertoire is complemented by traditional English Nursery and other songs and rhymes, action songs and games so children have an opportunity to experience a rich traditional selection of songs, following Kodály’s principals: the “Firm base of national folk music”.

Another aspect’s of Kodály’s work is focusing on engaging children in enjoyable, practical, carefully structured musical activity relevant to their physical, intellectual and emotional stage of development. This builds up a bank of memorable repertoire, which roots children’s understanding in real experience, and becomes a seedbed for future musical growth. Some early years music programmes focus instead on the written language of music. Colourful and attractive materials have been designed to teach children to recognise and name notes on the stave. Undoubtedly children can learn very complex written symbols, but what does this mean if unrelated to musical experience? To Kodály teachers this seems like “putting the cart before the horse”. (20)

The “Colourstrings approach” was developed by the Hungarian brothers Géza and Csaba Szilvay, at the East Helsinki Institute in Finland in the early 1970’s where they began teaching music to very young beginners, developing resources and an approach to teaching using visual and aural solutions. They based their approach on Kodály principles, the voice being the primary instrument. ‘The greatest instrument of all is the human voice, it is free and accessible to everyone.

Another important part of musicianship is pitch which is the frequency of music but it is the contour of a melody (the overall shape of the melody, not by how much it goes up and down) that has a larger affect on our emotional response to any given tune.

“One of the way that babies identify their mothers is by recognising the pitch of their voices. Babies have incredibly acute pitch abilities when they are born. The five month and infant can discriminate in pitch less then a semitone. This enables them to pick out very specific melodic information, and is the key to interpreting subtle vocal inflections.” (3) Research has shown that musicians who possess
absolute pitch generally began their studies before the age of seven. This indicates that the ability is retained at a point when the brain is still fairly flexible.“ (3)

Along with beat and rhythm, pitch is one of the main elements of music of which musicians need to be acutely aware. To sing we need to memorise what sound to sing and then reproduce it; this involves assimilating pitch. All instrumentalists need to be able to play their notes in tune. In order to be able to do this, players need to know exactly which sound needs to come out of the instrument inside their heads before they play. Other instruments such as the piano and guitar allow learners to get away with not doing this. (20)

“The Colourstrings approach is based upon Kodály’s use of stick notation for rhythm and hand signs to denote pitch. At the Foundation Stage the emphasis is upon unconscious and half – unconscious levels of learning.” Children are offered carefully selected (based on Kodály’s recommendations) Singing Rascals and traditional English repertoire, starting with do and la pentatonic songs and in later stages (age 5-7) introducing various modes. Starting with the minor third So-Mi children, gradually progress to singing pentatonic songs and learning to sing songs. One of the favourite So-Mi song is “See Saw Up and Down” which they sing as group as well as experience the movement of up and down on a toy sea saw in pairs taking turns. This song provides a great platform in the later Colourstrings years – beyond the kindergarten years – to introduce the singing hands and learn the hand sings of So and Mi.

Once the children have a well established SR repertoire - probably after 3-6 six months - song recognition games can be introduced when they are sang or played the tune of the songs and asked to match them with the pictures of the songs.

Another example of employing the Kodály principles in the Colourstrings approach is the Relative Solfa with “moveable do” to develop relative pitch. This encourages the child to hear how different notes of the scale differ and how they relate to each other. In the use of the solfa syllables (e.g Do, Re, Mi) each sound has a handsign. The sound and the physical hand sign together helps the children to recognise pitch relations and intervals. The hand moves up as the pitch does (11).

In Colourstrings Music Kindergartens children around four years of age depending on their previous CS experience and receptiveness, handsigns can be introduced at a conscious level - starting with So and Mi) then progressing to the pentatonic handsigns first (So – Mi – La – Do –Re).

Musical movement games are vital throughout the Colourstrings Kindergarten sessions, as the movement activity links together the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic elements that result in a deeper understanding of the material and development of musical memory and, consequently, the “inner hearing”. Teachers make conscious certain elements (such as rhythm or pitch names) only after the actual element has been experienced unconsciously in different song contexts.

Children love playing games in all ages and musical movement games are brilliant as they often cover most aspects of musical skills without the children realising them at all. For example, one of the favourite games for 3-4 years old is Doggie Doggie Where Is Your Bone?.

In this game the children practise a whole rage of musical and social skills:

- singing:
  - solo and in a group,
  - pitch: minor 3rd and perfect 4th
  - rhythm: TiTi (two eighth notes) and Ta (quarter note),
  - phrasing, social:
  - taking turns,
  - literacy: reading their names on pegs,
  - final motor skills: pinching the pegs and turning them upside down to mark that they had their turns, drama: playing the actions of the song, singing questions and statements,
- exercising patience,
- experiencing joy when they successfully find out who hid the bone and
- reward each other’s achievements with claps
- aural discrimination to recognise the voice.

**Dancing** can be the climax of excitement of the Colourstrings Kindergarten sessions and provide a great opportunity for fun and developing many dancing, musical and social skills at the same time. I have been using Hungarian folk dancing in my CS sessions where children use their listening skills to move to the music, they walk to the pulse of the music to stay with it, they change steps, actions and movements during the music, they move in different formats: in a big group, in pairs and in small groups and create different shapes: star, circle moving in and out, chain, gates. Dancing is accompanied by clapping of different rhythm patterns such as TiTi-Ta.

One of the most loved **Singing Rascals song is Dreaming** by all ages. In my the 2-3 and 3-5 yrs Music Kindergarten groups children sing it beautifully together and demand it all over again as they love singing the lovely melody as well as acting the song. Many children, when I asked them to draw a picture of their favourite song, drew the picture of Dreaming. First we sing and rock our teddies asleep together and put them on the floor for a sleep, then we get out our rainbow (parachute) and we sing again while we are travelling on our rainbow, then the third time we lay down on our rainbow and get ready for our listening section. When the listening part is over we come off our rainbow gently, wake our teddies up and get ready to sing goodbye. In this part the children experience several things: singing quietly together, rocking teddies asleep to the pulse, imagining our journey on the rainbow, listening to music for 2-3 minutes depending on the age group, move the rainbow to the pulse together, exposed to the lovely colours of the parachute, feeling to be a group when we all hold and move the parachute ect.

Musical movement games and dancing can **enhance the fulfilment of the “Esteem needs”** (level 4) in Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs model and contributing to the holistic delivery of the music sessions through:

- **self-esteem and achievement**, (active music making gives children the opportunity to develop new musical and other interpersonal skills such as sharing, taking terms, being patient and reward others for their achievements, therefore provides them with a sense of achievement that leads to increased self-esteem),
- **independence** (children are encouraged to work individually as well as in pairs, in small and large groups for example: solo singing, small group singing),
- **responsibility** (colourstrings classes develop children’s sense of responsibility by involving them in some tasks individually for example: taking part in preparation of the class: putting up pictures, giving out and collecting instruments shakers, bells, be mindful of others when dancing to avoid accidents),

**Conclusion**

“Making music can assist in the development of all of these so-called ‘intelligens’ by having a positive effect upon: the connection in, and structure of the brain, general coordination skills – mental and physical coordination, spatial reasoning skills, memory functions, language skills, maths comprehension, social skills, mental and physical health” (21)

It starts with the bond between parent and baby. Colourstrings Kindergarten encourages participation in class and at home, this helps foster a positive start to the young child’s experience of music and the parent’s involvement. Colourstrings Kindergartens provide a friendly, warm, safe atmosphere for the children to experience and make music. Children need to feel the affection, security and love of their parent. „When a mother or father or care giver wants to comfort a child, she sings or chants. Nearly everyone knows intuitively that this is a magic wand for creating a peaceful moment for a child. Through music, we are attuned to each other and establish positive bonds.” (21)
Colourstrings Kindergartens the teachers encourage good connection and an understanding relationship between teacher, parent and child. Children benefit from the parent knowing the songs and singing at home. Books and CD’s are available to reinforce music making at home. The child and the whole family are involved. “It is a virtuous circle, which radiates force into the whole of society.” Géza Szilvay. The essence of Colourstrings, Géza describes as „Colourstrings is a family-centred and a child-centred educational philosophy, programme and technique which, with the help of music, desires to strengthen a happy childhood. A happy childhood makes a happy adulthood possible.”

At the centre of the Kindergarten is the young child and his/her family to which they belong.

Kindergarten offers young children many benefits „they will have a high degree of musical competence, technical ability, a deep love of music, a means of self expression, and a social and recreational tool that will last them a life time.” as cited in Colourstrings Szilvay Foundations website.

Some children whom take part in Colourstrings Kindergarten Music classes might choose to be a professional musician later in their life and for those music will probably provide the area where they can fulfil their potential and continue to grow, and those will fulfil the highest level of needs in Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model: “Self-Actualization needs” (level 5) through:

✓ realising personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences, creativity. (12,30,31,32)

The majority of children hopefully will become music and singing loving adults, parents and musically literate audience, which was the dream of Zoltán Kodály.

I could not agree more with Philip Sheppard's conclusion in „Music makes your child smarter: „Music binds us all together in the past, present, and future, acting as a kind of social glue. I believe music can positively affect a growing child by providing an outlet for expression, a place for confidence to flourish, and for the sense of self to be reinforced. This, in turn, enables children to be prepared for learning – and only when children are prepared to learn (in every sense of that phrase ) can they begin to fulfil their potential. (21) Table 1: Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs motivational model

References:

Maria Chambers Colourstrings Associate Teacher – Music Kindergarten August 2012
1. Becky Welsh, The Importance of Inner Hearing, The British Kodály Academy’s website
2. British Kodály Academy’s website http://www.britishkodalyacademy.org
4. Colourstrings’ website http://www.colourstrings.co.uk/
5. Cyrilla Rowsell Kodály and Pulse, Music Teacher May 2011
8. Forrai Katalin, Ének az óvodában, Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1985
9. Grove Concise Dictionary of Music
11. http://www.annahimsworthmusic.com
15. Karen Mackenzie Ideas for Dance and Movement and for Developing Musical Literacy
17. Kodály Concept of Music Education
18. Leeper, Dales; Skipper, and Witherspoon, 1974, p.374. p1 Musical Growth and Development
19. Mannie Burn, Are We Pitching It Right? BKA Newsletter 2002
20. Music Education in the Early Years by Celia Waterhouse
22. Philippa Bunting The Colourstrings Method, Music Teacher May 2011
23. The Kodály Centre of London http://www.kodalycentre.co.uk
24. The Kodály Concept British Kodaly Website Gillian Earl, 2004
25. The Kodály Experience ABRSM website
26. Touched by Musical Discovery: Disciplinary and Cultural Perspectives Proceedings of the ISME
27. Early Childhood music Education Commission Seminar, China Cultural University, 2006
30. Atkinson and Hilgard’s Introduction to Psychology, Published by Cengage Learning EMEA, 2009
Curriculum vitae of Maria Chambers - Music

Music Education and Qualification:

“Colourstrings Music Kindergarten Teacher Level 2 course (09-2013 – 01/2014)
“Colourstrings Music Kindergarten Teacher Level 1 course
“COLOURSTRINGS” International Music Kindergarten Teaching Course
(Szilvay Fundation August 2010-2012)

“RINGATÓ” Music Kindergarten Education training for children 0-6 yrs (HCG Training 2010)

Tutor: Ms Malka Rosenberg

09/2003-06/2004 Pre-Foundation Programme in Music, Singing Musicianship 2
Goldsmith University of London, UK Tutor: Mr Maurice-Bertrand Quintart

09/1979 – 1987 Kodaly Specialist Music and Singing Primary School,
Békéscsaba, Hungary

Singing Tuition:

09/2009 - 09/2010 Private Singing Tuition with Catherine Dienes Williams - Guildford Cathedral. Guildford
25/06/2005 Private Singing Tuition with Jennifer Snapes, Guildford Choral Society Singing Weekend

Recitals:

06/2004 Summer End of Term Recital, from Andrew Lloyd Webber: The Phantom of the Opera: Think of me
03/2004 Spring End of Term Recital, from Bizet’s Carmen: Habanera
12/2003 Autumn End of Term Recital, Guilbert and Sullivan: Sorry her lot who loves too well

Workshops:

25-26/06/2006 Guildford Choral Society Singing Weekend, Chichester, UK:
Introduction to Alexander Technique (Margaret Humphrey Clark), Delivering the text (Richard Suart), A Capella Singing (Brenda Rattray) Music includes: Bach: St John Passion, Vaughan Williams: Festival Te Deum, Conductor: Mark Forkgen
03/2005 Vocal Mechanics Workshops Tutor: Mr Maurice-Bertrand Quintart

Memberships:

09/2004 – to date: Guildford Choral Society, First Soprano, Musical Director: Jonathan Willcocks
01/2003 – to date: Royal Grammar School Guildford Parent Choir, Musical Director: Peter White
Music teaching experience:

Hungarian Music and Language Teacher (0-12 years) April 2009 – to date
Hungarian Cultural Association Guildford

Kindergarten Music Teacher (0-7 years) January 2010- to date
Christopher Robin Montessori Nurseries Surrey

Performances:

12/2013 Family Christmas Concert G-Live
09/2013 Royal Albert Hall BBC UK’s Top 10 Hymns and Carols
09/11/2013 Handel: Israel in Egypt Guildford Cathedral
22/06/2013 Sing Africa Jazz Set Will Todd: Mass in Blue, Guildford Cathedral
07/06/2013 Beethoven: Symphony no 9with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Albert Hall, London
16/12/2012 G-Live Christmas Concert, Guildford
15/12/2012 GCS's Christmas Concert, Guildford
06/2012 Mednelsson: Elijah, G-Live Guildford

15/03/2012 Demjén “Kell még egy szó…” St Peter’s Church London, Hungarian Embassy
06/2011 Opera Gala featuring music by Verdi, Mozart, Puccini and Bizet London Gala Orchestra, Guildford Cathedral
03/2010 Carl Orff: Carmina Burana, Lauridsen: O Magnum Mysterium, Guildford Cathedral
06/2009 Verdi: Requiem, Guildford Cathedral, Guildford
11/2008 Belshazzars Feast, Guildford Cathedral
03/2007 Carl Jenkins: The Armed Man, Royal Grammar School’s Parent’s Choir, Guildford Cathedral
03/2006 Bach: St John Passion, Guildford Cathedral
11/2005 Faure’s Requiem, Poulenc: Gloria, Guildford Cathedral
03/2005 Mozart’s Requiem, Royal Grammar School’s Parent’s Choir, Guildford Cathedral
03/2003 Carl Orff: Carmina Burana, The Royal Grammar School’s Parents Choir, Guildford Civic Hall
07/2002 Verdi: Aida (concert version), Opera Box, Bourne Hall Open Air Jubilee Festival, Epsom

Future concerts 2012-2013

http://www.guildfordchoral.org/main.pl?diary

Music Promotion:

07/2012 “RINGATÓ” Family Singing Session, Guildford, Surrey
01/2012 “MUZSIKÁS” Hungarian Folk Music Concerts for adults and children, Guildford, Surrey
03/2009 Vilmos Gryllus Concert for children and adults, Royal Grammar School Guildford, Surrey
09/2002-07/2003 Music Evening’s and Singing Club at Wimbledon School of English, Wimbledon