

STAR-POST (MUSIC)



FACILITATING CREATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE MUSIC MAKING IN THE MUSIC CLASSROOM

As music teachers, we seek to always engage our students musically, so that the quality of music learning will be enhanced. One effective way to do this is through the facilitating of creative and collaborative music making in music lessons. This could be done in a *large group setting* where the teacher models musical ideas for students to imitate, or put together musical ideas from students, and organising them into a performance. Another way is through facilitating various small groups within the class in their music making activities such as song-writing, creation of soundscapes or aural-copying of a music performance from a music CD or video.

In collaborative music making, students are given opportunities to make musical decisions as they shape a composition together or put together a performance. They exercise critical and inventive thinking as they create or interpret musical ideas, evaluate and analyse these and build them into larger pieces of music. At the same time, students have direct experiences in music making, have

greater control of their learning, and hence more likely to be motivated towards their music learning, and to be engaged.

The critical role of creative and collaborative music making cannot be overstated. They are present in several established music teaching approaches. In more formal music approaches such as Kodály and Orff, students are engaged through creative activities such as improvisation and movement to learn or to demonstrate their understanding of the music concept. In other informal or non-formal music approaches, students are engaged through experiences such as copying music by ear, where the starting-points for the curriculum design are the music experiences rather than the music concepts.

With creative and collaborative music making, our students will have personal encounters with music situated in a social environment, which can become valuable experiences that will stay with them for a very long time, and develop in them a life-long love for music, which is the aim of our General Music programme.



REFLECTIONS FROM FURTHER STUDIES AT THE KODÁLY INSTITUTE

By Sheryl Sim



Kodály viewed music as an indispensable means of human education, perceiving a complete music education as one that encompassed not only technical skills, but more importantly also giving the learner an insight in its musical culture. Kodály's philosophy of music education is centred in the singing of Hungarian folk song and children's song, stemming from the principle that music education should encompass 'not only professional knowledge and technical skills, but it should give a culture, a discipline, a system of values as well.'¹

During my one-year stint in Kecskemét, I had the opportunity to experience the rich folk culture in Hungary and how Hungarians embrace their heritage through the singing of folk songs and regular participation in folk dances. This experience triggered my thoughts on national identity and made me reflect upon the songs that are representative of Singapore. Through the Folk Music lectures that I had attended, I also gained a deeper understanding of the musical culture in folk songs, and as a result, a heightened appreciation for them. Although folk music is not as widely seen/heard in Singapore today, it is possible to impart the knowledge and bring the beauty of Singapore's diverse culture into the music classroom through singing of songs that are representative of our rich ethnic composition.

Kodály believes that a vocal-based music education is not the only path to music, but is by far the most inclusive. He

viewed singing as an effective tool to educate the musical ear and develop musical skills through rigorous aural training. The musicianship classes that I had attended during my course allowed me to experience at first-hand the aural sensitivity towards various musical elements (rhythm, melody, harmony, pitch, form and stylistic expression) in the sung repertoire.

The application of Kodály's philosophy was best demonstrated in Methodology lectures, which focused on the sequential progression of musical activities vital in the scaffolding of music understanding. Kodály believed that conscious knowledge of music concepts should be built on music material previously experienced to provide ample musical preparation for the presentation of concepts and its practical application through music-making. Lessons planned and delivered with the students' learning in mind would help to ensure their success, building their confidence and love for learning.

During my study, I had the privilege of observing music lessons held in 'Kodály Singing Schools' (primary schools with a niche and focus on singing) in Budapest, Szolnok and Nyíregyháza. What stood out from these lessons was the sequential development of music concepts through the experiential approach, incorporating a wide variety of singing games, folk songs and Western art music. Each lesson incorporated the aspect of play through singing games

1. Dobszay, L. (2009). After Kodály: Reflections on Music Education. Kecskemét, Hungary: Kodály Institute of the Liszt Academy. (Continued on the following page)

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in pairs/groups, which I felt were beneficial in developing children's interpersonal skills and physical development through movement. Children also experienced spatial awareness and developed social skills such as respect for one's personal space through music games that incorporated free movement. In addition to the music games, music reading and writing skills were prepared, presented and practiced in each lesson, building upon the knowledge and music experience from previous lessons to ensure a smooth path to music literacy.

The trip to Hungary was a humbling learning journey that allowed me to experience the Kodály Pedagogy from its source. The Hungarian pedagogical framework of 'Preparation, Presentation and Practice' was helpful in the sequential design of lesson plans with my students' various learning needs in mind. The variety of musical experiences that I had opportunity to be immersed in during the course reframed my perspective of the music teacher as a practising musician. It made me realise that the teacher's continuous musical development is crucial in the musical teaching of students, motivating me to continually expand my musical knowledge, pedagogical skills and repertoire in order to inspire students in the music classroom.

The music teacher is a central figure, not only in the transfer of musical knowledge and skills to students, but also in the development of students' musical sensitivity and instilling in them the love for music. According to Denise Bacon, Kodály advocate and founder of the Kodály Centre of America, the progressive sequencing of musical activities to scaffold musical understanding in the Kodály-inspired music education is 'only a skeleton on which a gifted and imaginative teacher may hang his or her ideas².' The real applicability and adaptability of Kodály's pedagogical philosophy in music education lies in the strengths and pedagogical understanding of each music teacher.

Sheryl Sim attended the Kodály milestone programmes organised by STAR in 2011. She implemented the music ideas learnt into her classroom and found the pedagogical approach helpful in her students' musical learning. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the Kodály philosophy in music education, Sheryl pursued a Masters course in Kodály Pedagogy at the Kodály Institute in Kecskemét, Hungary, and graduated in June 2013. She has joined STAR as a programme manager and will be conducting parts of the Kodály milestone programme in October 2013.



2. Bacon, D. (1993). *Hold fast to dreams: writings inspired by Zoltan Kodály*. Wellesley, Mass.: Kodály Center of America.

21ST CENTURY MUSIC LEARNING



What, why and how do Music pedagogical practices and principles contribute to effective fostering of [21st century competencies \(21CC\)](#) and student outcomes? With this research question, the Music team at STAR started on a 2-year journey with 12 music teachers as part of the PE, Art and Music (PAM) research.

An International Panel (IP) comprising local and international educators and experts was convened. Based on their visits in January and in September, they observed that our teachers were generally effective in classroom management, setting routines, and creating a positive learning environment. They recommended that teachers could now focus on:

- a. Developing more student-centric lessons by paying attention to their facilitation of creativity and critical thinking, and empowering their students
- b. Modelling musicality and musical behaviours so that students can experience music at a more aesthetic level
- c. Motivating our students to *value* their music learning

We believe that students can demonstrate 21CC if they are given opportunities to demonstrate and develop these skills. And we can provide these opportunities in our music lessons, if we, as teachers, develop a larger repertoire of teacher moves to facilitate creativity and critical thinking. We can motivate our students to become self-directed learners and active contributors, if we provide more opportunities for students to make musical decisions, and if we value their musical contributions.

There is much more we can do, as music teachers. Together, we can make a positive impact on music education in Singapore.

Reflection Questions for Student-Centric Music Classrooms

- » How do I know where my students are at in their learning process? Do I use many strategies to check individual students' understanding during each lesson?
- » How am I planning my lesson activities according to what I know about my students? How am I catering for different learning styles?
- » How do I make my music lessons relevant to my students? Have I connected the music they learn with their daily lives, the larger socio-cultural contexts and their identities? Have I provided opportunities for real life application?
- » How have I used strategies to empower students to take ownership of their learning? Do my students have opportunities to make musical decisions? Have I also provided my students choice(s) in tasks, selection of materials, and participate in how they would be assessed?
- » How have I facilitated reflection and critical thinking in my students? How have I guided my students to create and improvise, and to reflect on their work? How have I guided my students to respond to questions or ask relevant questions? How have I facilitated students to think in music (e.g. compare music performances, develop musical ideas and a personal interpretation)?
- » How have I facilitated creativity? Have I encouraged students to generate ideas, refine, evaluate and develop their ideas independently? Have I created an environment that allowed my students' contributions to be respected and valued?
- » How have I built momentum in my students' learning? Am I using the appropriate level of music challenges to motivate and engage my students throughout the lesson?

P R O G R A M M E S

Events

TITLE OF PROGRAMMES	DETAILS	PARTICIPANTS
Celebración	31 October 2013 2:30pm to 5:30pm Multi-purpose Hall, Hort Park	STAR Champions & Associates
Afternoon Soirée	8 November 2013 3:00pm to 5:30pm STAR Music Workshop, Blk K, Lvl 1	MTTP and CoP participants

Milestone Programmes

Key mandatory programmes at key stages of the teaching career to achieve professional renewal, reinvention and positive transformation in teaching beliefs and practices.

TITLE OF PROGRAMMES	DETAILS	PARTICIPANTS
Orff Workshop (Secondary) *Fully Subscribed	28 October to 1 November 2013 STAR Recital Studio, Blk K, Lvl 3	CS1 and 2 Music Secondary teachers
Kodaly Workshop *Fully Subscribed	28 October to 1 November 2013 STAR Training Room 2, Blk A	CS1, 2 and 3 Music Primary or Secondary teachers

Supporting Programmes

Programmes to provide new areas of learning and broaden perspectives.

TITLE OF PROGRAMMES	DETAILS	PARTICIPANTS
Composing with World Music Workshop by Andy Gleadhill *Fully Subscribed	1st Run: 21 October 2013 2nd Run: 22 October 2013 3rd Run: 23 October 2013 3:00pm to 6:00pm STAR Blk K Lvl 3	CS1, 2 and 3 Music Primary and Secondary teachers

Supporting Schemes

In collaboration with National Arts Council.

TITLE OF PROGRAMMES	DETAILS	PARTICIPANTS
2014 Artist-Mentor Scheme (AMS) and Arts Pedagogical Research Fund (APRF)	Application Deadline: 30 Oct 2013 Notification for APRF (Available only on MOE Intranet) Notification for AMS (Available only on MOE Intranet)	Interested Art, Dance, Drama & Music Teachers

Communities of Practice (CoP)

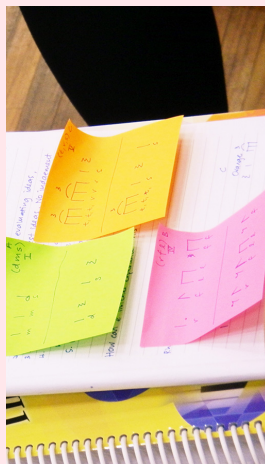
Programmes that are premised on collaboration and sharing to collectively improve music skills and/or teaching practices.

NAME OF COP	DETAILS	CONTACT
Teachers' Choir	Every Tuesday 4:00 to 6:00pm, Blk K Level 3 STAR Recital Studio	* We welcome all teachers and Allied Educators to participate in the CoPs. Please contact our Programme Executive Ms Tan Bee Ngoh (Tan_Bee_Ngoh@moe.gov.sg) and let her know your area of interest.
Javanese Gamelan Ensemble	Every Thursday 4:00 to 6:00pm, Blk K Level 2 STAR Gamelan Studio	
Teachers' Chamber Orchestra	Every Friday 3:00pm to 5:30pm, Blk K Level 1 STAR Music Workshop	
Teachers' Guitar / Ukulele Ensemble *New!	Please register your interest by clicking HERE	

WHAT'S ON AT STAR

Facilitating Creativity in the Music Classroom: Reflections from Teachers

Some of our Senior Teachers (Music) and experienced teachers attended the "Facilitating Creativity in the Music Classroom" workshop run by our overseas educator-in-residence Ms Ardith Haley from Acadia University, Canada in August. At this workshop, Ms Haley shared about how we need to break out of our old mental models of music instruction to unleash our students' innate creative powers.



MRS IRENE CHIN

WEST GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Crafting of rubrics with the pupils will help set the expectations. Even for the lower primary pupils, bite-size rubrics crafting could be incorporated during the lessons.

MRS KIMBERLY SNG

ANGLICAN HIGH SCHOOL

To be creative, I must first be open to new ideas. After this workshop, I realise that it is possible to structure the creative process with parameters, while not limiting it with perimeters.

MRS BRIDGETTE TEH

CHONGZHENG PRIMARY SCHOOL

It is important to ask pupils questions that encourage critical thinking, while remembering not to be impatient and to give sufficient time for pupils to think.

MS DEBORAH GAN

ST. ANDREW'S SECONDARY SCHOOL

The strongest idea that came across during the workshop was that of play; students learning through authentic experiences in a fun manner with the teacher playing a supporting role. This is quite a paradigm shift as most of my personal musical education experience did not involve "play" and if there were any "creative" moments, they were mainly impromptu and "unscaffolded."

C O M M I N G U P



Afternoon Soirée

If you are free on 8 November at 3pm, do drop by STAR (Blk K, Level 1) to enjoy a wonderful afternoon of music performances by our Teachers' Choir, Teachers' Chamber Orchestra, Javanese Gamelan Ensemble, and our music teachers on the Music Teacher Practitioner Programme. Our teachers have worked hard to prepare for this concert so do show your support!



Arts Education Forum

Our colleagues at the Arts Education Branch will be organising an Arts Education Forum on 11 November (Primary Schools) and 12 November (Secondary Schools), for HODs/SHs/Teachers-in-charge of Arts curriculum. Notifications have been sent out to all principals and registration closes on 25 October. For more details, do contact the Arts Education Branch at 68319785.

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