

Everything you need to know about

# Teaching Your Young Child

# MUSIC

(from baby and up)



**Vicki Watson** BA (Hons.), QTS, PGCE

  
Kids are brilliant!

Everything you need to know about  
**TEACHING YOUR YOUNG CHILD MUSIC**

(from baby and up)

by

Vicki Watson *BA (Hons.), QTS, PGCE*



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## *ABOUT THE AUTHOR*

Vicki Watson is a freelance writer and musician whose publications have ranged from teacher resource books and parental guides to poetry and comedy writing. After completing a teaching degree, she spent nine years working in a primary school as a classroom teacher and Deputy Head Teacher before leaving to have her children. She has been playing and teaching the clarinet, saxophone and piano for almost longer than she can remember and she has been giving lessons to adults since when she was still in school herself. These days, when she's not scribbling in her notebook or playing the clarinet, her many interests include playing chess, rock-climbing, stargazing, geocaching and tending her allotment. She is a member of Mensa and lives in Wiltshire, United Kingdom, with her husband, three sons and four chickens.

## *ABOUT BRILLKIDS*

BrillKids designs and develops innovative educational products, programs and content that help make early education as natural and as fun-filled as possible - for both the child and the parent.

BrillKids' goal is to provide highly engaging and effective learning experiences to children of all ages - whether at home or in school, around the world and regardless of social status or financial capability. The whole BrillKids Team believes in the importance of early learning, and all their products and services are created with the philosophy that teaching (and learning) can be fun, easy and effortless.

BrillKids' three core product offerings are Little Reader, Little Math, and Little Musician, which aim to help parents teach their young child reading, math and music in a way that's engaging for the child, and easy for the parent. In particular, Little Musician includes a full 1-year structured curriculum with chord recognition, solfège, note sounds, and rhythm exercises, as well as music appreciation sessions. All lessons are presented via the Little Musician software in full color and highly engaging multimedia, guaranteeing a fun-filled learning experience for you and your child.

For more information, please visit [www.brillkids.com](http://www.brillkids.com).

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### *WHY TEACH YOUR CHILD MUSIC?*

*'Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind,  
flight to the imagination, and life to everything.'*

*Plato*

Ask anyone why music is important and you will get a multitude of answers. Music is something that has intrinsic and unique meaning to everyone, regardless of their social status, their nationality, gender, age or bank balance. Music forms the backdrop to our lives and as humans we are naturally drawn towards it.

Like language, it has the power to communicate and to express emotion, to lift our spirits, motivate and inspire us. It unites people, creates lasting memories and can be both a source of comfort and joy. It sparks the imagination and encourages creativity. Music engages every part of our being, physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and spiritually. It provides an escape from our everyday lives and a freedom of expression unlike any other art-form. At the same time, it is highly disciplined and structured, developing the brain and promoting learning. Fulfilling, rewarding and above all joyful, a world without music would be a sad and dreary place. We believe that a love of music is one of the greatest gifts you could give your child and one that will last them a lifetime.

## *SHOULDN'T YOU WAIT UNTIL THEY'RE A BIT OLDER?*

Why? Your baby has been learning about music and sound since they were born and quite likely even before birth. Early childhood is a crucial time for learning when the brain is undergoing rapid transformation. Many would argue that this is the best and indeed the easiest time to teach your child music, or anything else. Young children love to learn. They are naturally creative and inquisitive, keen to explore the world around them in all its facets. Music is no exception. It is rare to find a baby or toddler who doesn't enjoy dancing or making music and if something is enjoyable, surely it's the ideal time to learn? Making music together is incredibly rewarding for adult and child alike; it enables you to bond with your child, learn new skills and above all have fun. Why would you want to wait?

## *DO YOU NEED TO BE A SPECIALIST?*

Absolutely not! Just as mothers and fathers 'teach' their children to speak or to walk, so you can teach your child basic musical skills that will last a lifetime. And just as with learning to talk, the most important things you can give are your time, enthusiasm and encouragement. You don't need to play an instrument or read music. You don't need to know your Vivaldi from your Beethoven. Nor do you need to be a qualified teacher or have a music degree. Without any training, parents 'teach' their children an entire language, as well as social and emotional skills and the physical skills of walking, running, jumping, dressing themselves and going to the toilet - all before they reach school age. The truth is, children want and need to learn and given the right start in life, they are their own best teachers. With exposure to a rich and stimulating musical environment and a willingness to try something new, anybody can teach their child music.

## *DO YOU NEED ANY EQUIPMENT?*

Not especially. Many of the activities suggested in this book require no equipment at all and some only require everyday household objects or easily-found items. A few activities require simple instruments, but most of these can be acquired easily and cheaply. The only piece of equipment you may need to source is a CD player.

## *OVERVIEW OF THIS BOOK*

This book is intended for any parent of a baby, toddler or preschool child. It is written in clear, non-specialist language and is easily accessible whether you are a musician yourself or not. We have focused on activities you can do at home with your child but have also provided information on other more formal approaches to early music education which may be of interest. Although written with young children in mind, the messages and activities in the book could easily be adapted for use with older children or even adults.

It should be noted that the aim of this book is not to produce child prodigies or professional musicians, although it will stand your child in good stead if they do choose to pursue music later on in life. It is not about hot-housing your child into becoming the next Lang Lang or increasing their score in an IQ test. Neither is it about being a 'pushy parent', forcing or coercing your child into making music whether they want to or not. Instead, it is about giving your child the opportunity to learn through music, developing their confidence and skills, nurturing their creativity and imagination and making music a fun, fulfilling and enriching part of their lives.

We hope you enjoy the book and feel inspired to try some of the ideas with your child. Have fun!



# CHAPTER 2

## WHY TEACH MUSIC TO YOUNG CHILDREN?

### *MUSIC IN SOCIETY AND CULTURE*

Throughout time, in every known culture around the world, people have made music. As a means of expression and communication it is universal, transcending language, time and cultural barriers to unite people and communities. It triggers memories, enhances mood and has the power to excite or inspire the full range of human emotion. It is difficult to think of a celebration, occasion or significant event in which music doesn't play a role.

Today, music is all around us. Whether we are shopping at the supermarket, having a meal in a restaurant, listening to our car radios or downloading the latest track for our iPod, there are few areas of our lives in which music doesn't feature.

And yet active music-making for the majority of adults is rarer, particularly in the Western world. Inhibitions, a fear of failure, lack of self-confidence and a sense of music as an activity for the upper- and middle-classes all contribute to a sense that music is for the talented elite, rather than for everyone. Many of us feel that we can't sing in tune or keep in time and that to sing or make music in public would be embarrassing and awkward. And this rubs off on our children.

Luckily, babies and preschool children have none of these hang-ups. They are naturally creative and have no reason to fear failure. With all the exuberance of youth, they embrace new experiences and explore the world with all their senses. Music to them is an enjoyable experience and if they enjoy it, they will do it. In short, they know what's good for them.

Contrary to popular belief, everyone is born with an innate ability to make music, regardless of culture, ethnicity, standard of living or social background. Music isn't an activity for the rich, the middle-class or the gifted. You don't need special equipment or to be a trained professional. Music, quite simply, is for everyone.

## *MUSIC AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSION*

*'Music is born of emotion.'*

*Confucius*

As a means of expression, the power of music is unlimited. It has a unique capability to captivate, motivate, inspire and move us like no other art form can. Intuitive, spiritual and emotional, making music gives us a freedom of expression that very few other activities can give. It is almost impossible to make music without having the process affect our mood or emotional state.

Expressing ourselves is an essential element of being human. For babies and preschool children, music can create a channel through which they can freely explore and show their emotions. Improvisation and composition allow unlimited creativity and encourage ingenuity and problem-solving through play, as well as developing listening and social skills.

Recent years have seen an increased interest in the roles which creativity, ingenuity and imagination play on learning and lifelong success. Music specifically fosters and enhances these skills; music has the power to develop well-rounded individuals who are not afraid to persevere, make mistakes, try out new things and be original.

Music has long been recognized as a great healer and reliever of stress. Used with patients suffering from brain damage, autism, depression, dementia, anxiety, stress, cancer, stroke, ADHD or communicative problems, music therapy has been shown to improve recovery

times, manage pain, lower blood pressure, boost immunity, ease muscle tension, relax breathing and heart-rate and stimulate brainwaves (which mimic the pulse of the music, causing relaxation or stimulation).

In essence, music is good for us, body and soul.

## *MUSIC AND LANGUAGE*

*'After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music.'*

*Aldous Huxley*

You will often have heard people refer to music as a language, even 'the universal language'. Indeed, there is much to support this logic. Like a language, music has its own structures, contours, rhythms, phrases, patterns, intonations and nuances. It has its own grammar and syntax, and its own cultural identity and place in space and time. It conveys feelings and emotions and affects the mood of both performer and listener.

Music is far older than the written word and it is thought by many to pre-date speech. A *Scientific American* article of 2001 suggests that music actually pre-dates the human species, citing evidence as flute-like instruments found in excavations of Neanderthal sites in France and Slovenia. These instruments were found to be over 53,000 years old, making music by far the oldest known art-form in the world.

Children, of course, are born with an innate desire to learn and a capacity to communicate. Even before birth, they listen to the sound of their mother's heartbeat, learn to recognize her voice, show a preference towards her native language and respond with movement to familiar rhymes, stories and music. The ear is formed in the third week of gestation and is the first sensory organ to develop brain connections. From week 16, the ear is functional and the baby is actively listening by week 24.

At birth, a baby can recognize familiar songs and distinguish the voices of his parents from other voices. He shows a marked preference for songs sung by his mother or father over recorded songs and prefers soothing, classical music to harsh, rock music.

In the first weeks of life, babies listen intently to the world around them. They learn to locate the source of a sound, are startled by loud noises and soothed by “white noise” and well-structured, classical music.

As they continue to develop, babies and toddlers learn how to imitate sounds and create their own, with objects such as saucepans and wooden spoons and with their own bodies and voices. They sway along to the music and show enjoyment, smiling, clapping and learning to take turns with other children.

Research shows that greater attention to early language development by parents and caregivers encourages the development of literacy and communication skills. The elements of music (e.g. rhythm, pitch, timbre) are the very elements used in speaking a language and for this reason, music also is a crucial prerequisite to language development, preparing the ear and brain to listen to, assimilate and produce sounds.

## *BRAIN-BASED BENEFITS OF MUSIC-MAKING*

Plato once said that music “is a more potent instrument than any other for education”. Recent scientific research seems to be proving him right. Over the past two decades, there has been an increased interest in the science of the brain and the role of music in learning and education. Some of the key findings have been:

- When a musician plays or sings, he or she uses approximately 90% of the brain, more than any other activity (Wilson, University of California).
- There is no 'center for music-making' in the brain, but multiple areas of both left and right hemispheres are used when making music. Music is a whole-brain activity (Parsons, 1998).
- Music lessons in childhood actually enlarge the brain. An area used to analyze the pitch of a musical note is enlarged 25% in musicians compared to people who have never played an instrument. The earlier the musicians were when they started musical training, the bigger this area of the brain appears to be (University of Munster, 1998).
- Children who take part in musical activities achieve higher school grades than their non-music-making peers (Gardiner, Fox, Knowleds and Jeffrey, 1996).
- Good pitch discrimination has been shown to be a prerequisite to learning to read (Lamb, S.J., & Gregory, A.H., 1993).
- Music may be considered a "pre-language," and early music training may be useful in exercising the brain for higher cognitive functions (Leng and Shaw).
- Preschool children given piano lessons showed vastly improved spatial-temporal reasoning and puzzle-solving ability (Rauscher and Shaw, University of California).
- Instrumental practice enhances coordination, concentration and memory and brings about the improvement of eyesight and hearing (Wilson, University of California).
- Taking part in musical activities trains the brain in aesthetic literacy and the students' perceptual, imaginative and visual abilities (Sinatra, 1986).

- "Learning to control rhythm and tempo in group music-making helps students to perform other routine activities with more ease and efficiency" (Stanford University).
- Musical activity has been shown to increase mathematical ability (Gardiner, 1996).

In fact, it is becoming clear that the brain is much more flexible and adaptable than previously thought. Research in 'neuro-plasticity' shows that the brain itself changes in direct response to the environment and to experience, strengthening synapses and reorganizing neural pathways throughout life. Brain development, therefore, is not predetermined, but can be molded and shaped. In the first few years of life especially, the brain goes through a process of rapid physical development, in which exposure to music can play a critical role.

# CHAPTER 3

## KEY ASPECTS OF MUSIC

In this chapter, we look at some of the most important aspects to consider when teaching music to young children, or in fact to anyone. These key elements should be at the heart of any family music-making and will provide the foundation for later learning.

The key elements are:

- Developing a 'good ear'.
- The importance of singing.
- Developing a sense of rhythm.
- Developing a sense of pitch.
- The importance of listening.
- Using instruments.
- Composing and improvising.

### *DEVELOPING A 'GOOD EAR'*

You will have often heard people referred to as having a 'good ear for music' or by contrast being 'tone deaf', but what does this actually mean?

Having a 'good ear' means being able to hear sounds in your head, knowing how notes and chords sound in relation to one another and being able to identify when something is wrong. It also encompasses rhythmic awareness and the ability to repeat aural patterns or sequences. This ability to internalize and imagine sound is often called 'inner hearing'. Beethoven, for example, was someone with an excellent aural sense, despite being completely deaf. He 'heard' the music internally and then represented this as written music.

The importance of developing a 'good ear' is of vital importance to musicians, enabling them to translate what is in their head directly to their instrument, without any need for intermediary 'translation' or notation. Without this, and at its worst, music-making can be reduced to a note-matching exercise, a mechanical sequencing activity. We often hear of people who can play whole pieces of music after hearing them once or pick up an unknown piece of sheet music and sing it note-perfectly on the first attempt. This is what it means to have a 'good ear' and is what many musicians aspire to.

While most traditional methods of music education value the importance of aural training, there are many people who think this type of activity is started too late and viewed as an 'add-on' skill to the other technical aspects of performance. Instead, they feel that developing inner hearing is an intrinsic part of all music-making, perhaps the most important skill of all to develop. In accordance with this, we believe that the development of a keen musical ear is something that is best started early, while children are young. As with language acquisition, babies and children are learning aurally all the time, listening, internalizing and making sense of the sounds around them. And developing this sense doesn't need to be 'taught' in a rigid way. By giving children opportunities to listen to high-quality music, singing songs with them and playing simple games, you can enhance their natural capacity to develop a 'good ear'.

## *THE IMPORTANCE OF SINGING*

The importance of singing to your child cannot be over-emphasized. As babies, children are often exposed to a rich supply of singing, usually through their mother singing lullabies and nursery rhymes to them. Unwittingly, the mother is providing her newborn with exactly the type of music he or she needs to develop both musicality and language skills. Nursery rhymes and lullabies share many similarities with infant-directed speech, in particular having simple melodies, repeated rhythmic patterns and long vowel sounds. Interestingly, the form and



structure of lullabies differs little around the world and research has shown that people can recognize a lullaby distinctly from other song-types, even in a foreign language.

It has been shown in numerous educational studies and will come as no surprise to learn that the quality of interaction and partnership between children and their primary care-givers is highly significant in determining success in learning and life in general. It seems obvious that acting as a positive role-model and giving children access to a stimulating and safe environment will develop self-esteem and a positive attitude in our youngsters. We are aware of the importance of reading stories to our children, demonstrating simple counting and adding skills, insisting upon good manners and encouraging kindness. Yet beyond the baby years, the vast majority of parents stop singing to their children. Shockingly, a study by Levinowitz (1998) showed less than 50% of kindergarten-age children could differentiate between their singing and speaking voices. French pioneer Dr. Alfred Tomatis mentions being intrigued by the fact that song birds hatched by silent foster mothers can't sing.

## *BUT WHY DOES SINGING REMAIN IMPORTANT?*

Singing is something that everyone can do. There is no need to buy expensive instruments or wait until you are old enough or big enough to learn. Singing is one of the most joyous and sociable activities known to mankind, freeing the soul and relieving the stresses of everyday life. A physical, social, emotional and intellectual activity, singing is felt more deeply than playing an instrument because it is internal and thus has a more profound and personal effect. It is a fantastic way to bond with your child and gives them a positive and acceptable outlet for their emotions. Singing has been shown to increase social harmony, boost the immune system, improve powers of concentration, and enhance classroom performance. And a love of singing lasts a lifetime.

Through singing, all the basic elements of music can be learned. In fact, because of the lack of an instrument, singing is the quickest and most direct way to learn and internalize music.

Singing and developing a 'good ear' are two parts of a whole. It is impossible to sing without first imaging the sound within the ear and without a good aural sense, it would be impossible to sing in tune or in time. With regards to reading and language awareness, singing is becoming more widely accepted as a prerequisite to learning. With its rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and attention to sound itself, songs are a celebration of language. They are fun and easy to learn, often developing social skills such as turn-taking and collaboration along the way.

However, while most of us are happy to sing to our babies in the privacy of our own home, we become less confident and more inhibited as they grow up. Children pick up on this negativity and learn to associate singing with something they don't want to do. The only way to ensure that this doesn't happen is to sing with our children. Just as they need to hear adults talking, children need to hear adults singing in everyday life. They really don't care how well you can sing or what you sound like. There is no need to present a polished performance. To them, your singing voice is perfect just the way it is!

In Chapter Five, we will give you some suggestions for songs and singing games that you can use with your baby and preschooler, but here are some general tips to bear in mind when singing with children:

- Sing often. Incorporate singing into everyday life as well as making time for it as an activity in its own right. You could sing in the car or at bedtime after a bedtime story.
- Be enthusiastic and non-judgmental. Don't criticize their singing.
- Encourage repetition of favorite songs and chants, especially silly ones that make you both laugh. Enjoyment is crucial.
- Encourage children to sing on their own as well as with you. This will develop their confidence and self-esteem. Praise them when they do well.
- Where possible, keep the songs simple. Nursery rhymes and traditional songs are ideal as they have a limited pitch range and are repetitive.
- Relax and have fun! Don't make singing into a stressful situation. If things feel like they're getting tense, stop and do something else.

## *DEVELOPING A SENSE OF RHYTHM*

Our world is full of rhythm. The waxing and waning of the moon, the ebb and flow of the tide, the very passage of time itself are all controlled by predictable rhythms. As humans, we spend nine months before birth listening to the rhythmic beating of our mother's heart. The rest of our lives are lived out against the backdrop of our own rhythmic breathing.

Our speech and movements are naturally rhythmic. Whether we are walking, running, swimming or dancing, rhythm permeates our lives to such an extent that we rarely think about it. It is virtually impossible to walk without some sense of rhythm.

It is of no wonder then, that rhythm is often seen as the most important building block of music and that developing an accurate sense of rhythm is central to all music-making. Children love to move their bodies and this is one of the earliest musical skills they develop, swaying to the music, clapping and dancing. Simple activities and games involving dance and movement are therefore ideal as a starting point for this all-important skill. Marching in time to music, drumming, clapping games and chanting rhymes are all quick and fun activities that young children will enjoy and gain instant gratification from.

Later on in the book, we will introduce you to various activities that will develop your child's sense of pulse and rhythm but in essence, anything that involves the following will help:

- Clapping in time
- Bouncing baby on your knee in time to the music
- Marching in time
- Dancing
- Chants, rhymes and poems
- Skipping (for older children)
- Using percussion instruments such as drums to beat in time
- Playing copying games (copy the rhythm)

## *DEVELOPING A SENSE OF PITCH*

The term 'pitch' simply means how high or low a note is, whether it is a C or an F sharp. If you have a good sense of pitch, you will be able to identify the shape of musical phrases (tunes) and tell whether something is out of tune or not.

There are two main types of pitch that you will hear people refer to. These are absolute (or 'perfect') pitch and relative pitch.

### *PERFECT PITCH*

If I played a note on the piano and asked you to name it, chances are you would be unable to do so. In fact, only a tiny proportion of the world's population has this rare ability, that of perfect pitch (also known as absolute pitch). Most figures quote around 1 in 10,000 speakers of European languages. However, the prevalence of perfect pitch has been found to be much higher in speakers of tonal languages, in those who have a family member with perfect pitch, in those who are autistic and in those who are blind from birth. It has also been found to be more likely in those who started musical training at a young age.

There is some debate over the origin of perfect pitch, and whether the issue is one of nature or nurture. Many scientists believe that the answer lies in a mixture of the two, with some genetic predisposition towards perfect pitch which the brain then either maintains or discards depending upon the culture and environment a baby is brought up within. It may well be a case of 'use it or lose it'.

Interestingly, it has been found that when a mother is recorded singing a particular song to her infant on different days, she will tend to use the same absolute pitch (Bergeson & Trehub, 2002). Recent research also indicates that, as well as there being some kind of genetic

factor determining perfect pitch, infants preferentially use absolute pitch cues over relative pitch cues in certain situations. This suggests that all people may be born with perfect pitch but most lose the ability as they age. Some scientists feel that a genetic predisposition in some people may extend this neuro-developmental window, allowing them to maintain perfect pitch long enough for musical training to cement the skill. This is backed up by Deutsch, who suggests that for speakers of tonal languages, developing perfect pitch is like learning a second language, which becomes more difficult after a 'critical period' of development. For non-tonal language speakers, this 'critical period' occurs much earlier and therefore the development of perfect pitch is more like learning a first language.

If this is true, there are a great many compelling reasons for trying to maintain this skill in young children. For musicians, the increased sight-reading and singing ability, improved improvisation, composition and aural skills all bring enormous benefits, along with the ease of memorization and the heightened perception and comprehension when listening to music. A quick search on the Internet reveals a wealth of commercial educational programs available all claiming to develop perfect pitch, although these are mostly aimed at adults and have little in the way of scientifically-proven results. For infants, it could be argued, the process should be easier and more natural, as they are in the correct 'critical period' of development for this skill. For speakers of European languages, this 'training' would have to take place at an especially young age to be within this 'critical period' and would therefore most likely be carried out by parents at home.

Deutsch suggests that any child younger than age six may be able to develop perfect pitch through playing on a piano with labeled keys or listening to adults matching specific notes with their letter names. This theory has been put into practice with a Japanese method of teaching perfect pitch called the Eguchi Method, developed in Japan by Kazuko Eguchi around forty years ago. Used exclusively with very young children, the Eguchi Method claims to have taught perfect pitch to over 2,000 children, is used by more than 800 teachers around Japan and claims a success rate of almost 100 percent for those who begin training before they are four. The training involves children listening repeatedly (several times a day) to piano chords and identifying each by the raising of a colored flag. Later, children are

taught to name individual pitches within each chord. In Chapter Five, you will find some activities and games to develop your child's absolute and relative pitch.

While perfect pitch has clear advantages for musicians, it can also have its limitations. An individual with perfect pitch might become irritated and vexed on hearing a slightly out-of-tune performance or a well-known tune which has been transposed (played in a different key). They may be unable to play a transposing instrument (such as the clarinet or trumpet) or fail to develop relative pitch, having trouble with sight-reading, sight-singing, tuning and intonation. For most people with perfect pitch, the benefits far outweigh these disadvantages. For a more in-depth look at the advantages and disadvantages of having perfect pitch, please see Appendix One.

## *RELATIVE PITCH*

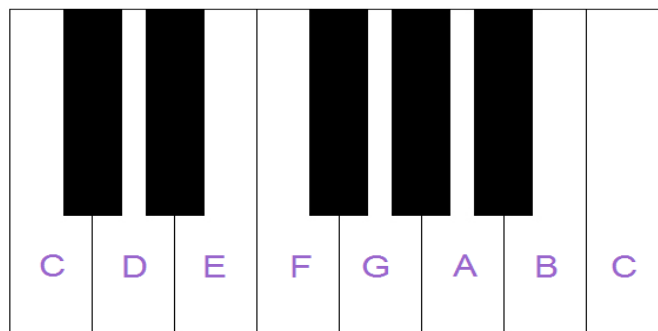
Relative pitch is the ability to relate one note to another by comparing the distance (or interval) between the two. For example, if a C is sounded on a piano, someone with relative pitch will be able to sing a D, simply by knowing that D is one note higher than C. The majority of musicians possess this skill to some degree and this is what enables them to sing a piece of music by looking at the written score (given a starting note) and to spot whether they have made a mistake or not. The skill of relative pitch is one that is essential to any musician and one that can be learned through the playing of an instrument or by more direct ear training.

One of the most common systems of teaching either fixed or relative pitch is through 'solfège' or 'solfeggio', where notes are ascribed the syllables Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So, La and Ti. Variations of the above include 'Sol' instead of 'So', and 'Si' instead of 'Ti'. Most people will be familiar with this concept through the song 'Do Re Mi' from the Rogers and Hammerstein film musical 'The Sound of Music'.

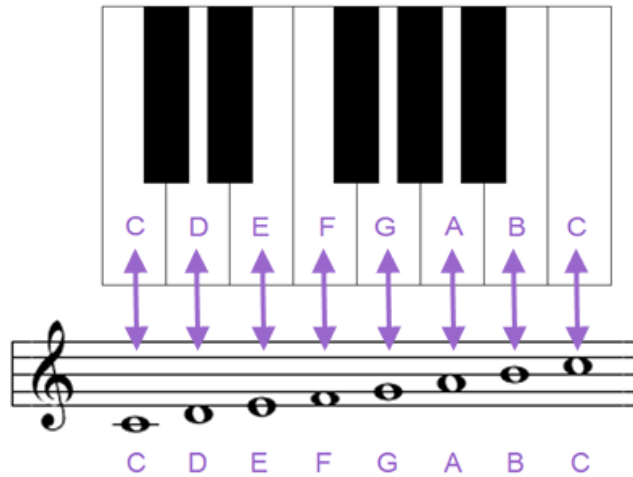
Solfège is probably the easiest and most widely-known system of learning pitch and makes the all-important links between listening, singing and eventually playing. The solfège names themselves (do-re-mi etc.) are easy to vocalize and all have open vowel endings ideal for singing, in contrast to letter names (ABC etc.). The system of learning solfège requires students to hear sounds in their mind before singing and thus fosters internalization and the development of listening and aural skills. With its great emphasis is placed upon the use of voice, the solfège system can enable very young children to learn pitch in a natural way, without having to also deal with the mechanics of operating an external instrument.

There are two types of solfège system - 'fixed do' and 'movable do' (also called tonic sol-fa). We will look briefly at the differences between the two before discussing how this applies to you and your child. For a more detailed comparison of the two solfège systems, please see Appendix Two. To begin with, it will be helpful to understand what we mean by a 'scale'.

On a piano keyboard (and on all western instruments), there are seven main notes: C, D, E, F, G, A and B. These are arranged in order from left to right and rise in pitch, one at a time (so D is one note higher than C).



In standard notation, these notes are represented as follows:



The above example, with its first and last note a C, is called 'the scale of C major'. Simply, a scale is eight ascending notes, beginning on a given 'key note', in this case, C.

### *THE 'FIXED DO' SYSTEM*

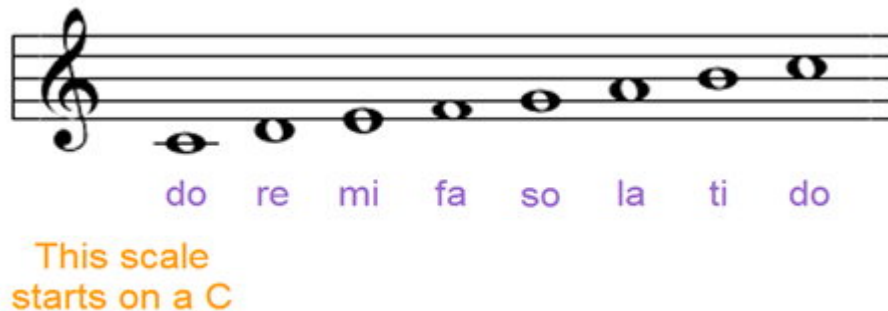
This system is commonly used in Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Belgium, Romania, Latin American countries, French-speaking Canada, China, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Greece, Iran, Lebanon, Israel and Japan. In this system, the syllables Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol (or So), La, and Si (or Ti) are used to name notes in the same way that the letters C, D, E, F, G, A, and B are used to name notes in English. The use of fixed do is more in line with that of absolute pitch, as the syllables Do, Re, Mi etc. always represent a given note or sound. Basically, 'Do' is just another name for 'C' and 'Re' is another name for 'D':





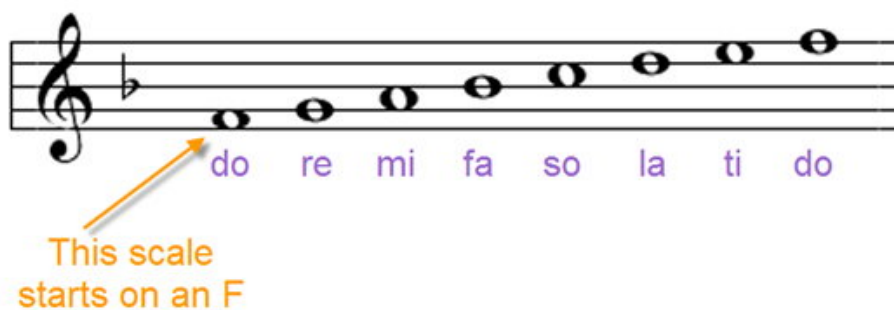
## THE 'MOVABLE DO' SYSTEM

This system is more commonly used in Australia, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States, Hong Kong and English-speaking Canada. In this system, each solfège syllable corresponds not to a pitch, but to a scale degree: the first note in a 'scale' is always sung as 'do', the second as 're' etc.



So if a piece of music is 'in C major' (i.e. the main, key note is C), the note of C is sung as 'do', and the second note D is sung as 're' (as in the 'fixed do' system).

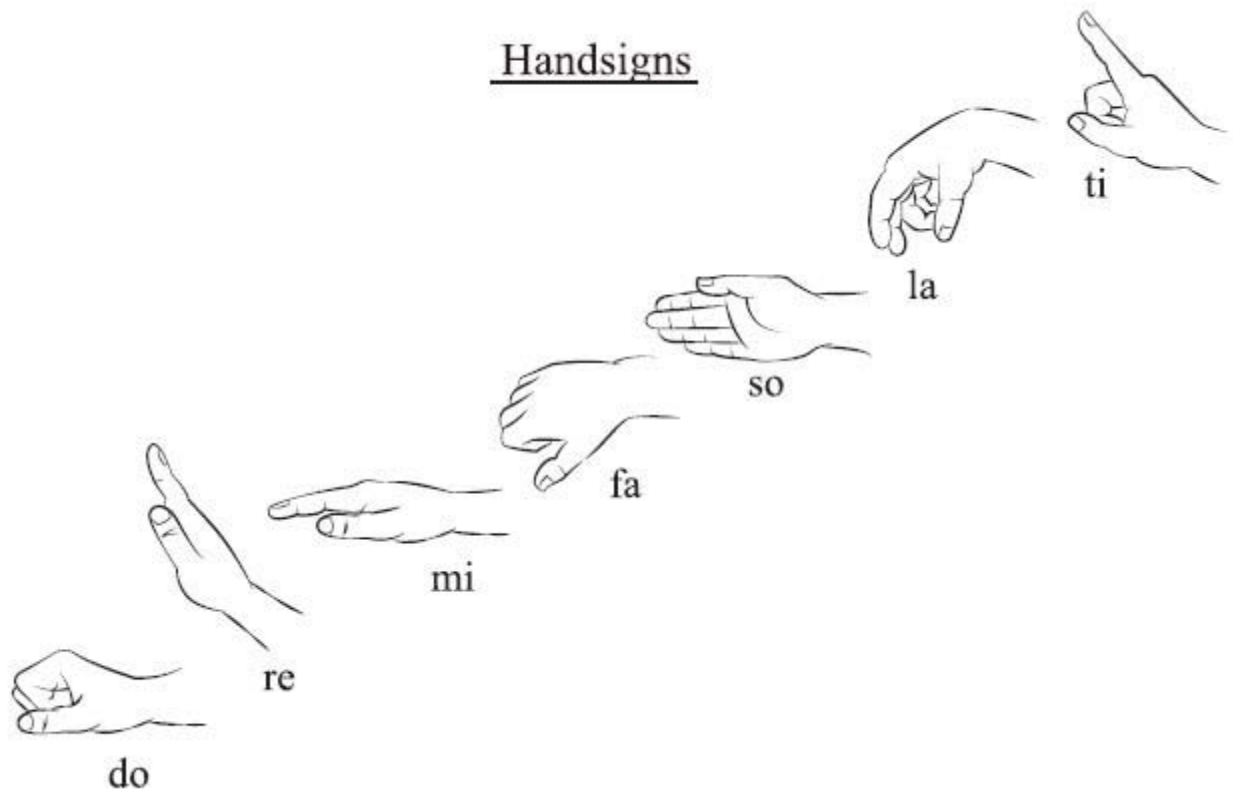
However, if the key changes from C major (i.e. the key note is no longer C), the syllable 'do' will also move.



The above scale starts on F and therefore an F is sung as 'do', a G as 're' etc.

So the tune 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' will always be sung to do, do, so, so, la, la, so regardless of whether it starts on a C, an F or a G.

One method to employ when teaching pitch, whether using fixed or movable do is the use of solfège hand signs. These can be introduced from a young age and can help to cement the understanding of absolute or relative pitch in a physical and visual way. Often referred to as the 'Curwen hand signs' and commonly used in the Kodály concept (see Chapter 3), they are easy to learn and can be used when singing familiar songs and when learning new music as children get older. The signs are as follows:



One issue with this system is that it may be difficult for babies and toddlers to follow before they gain enough manual dexterity. Hence others have devised similar systems that require gross motor movements to represent the syllables.

Regardless of which system you choose, it is best to start with two or three syllables and gradually add the others. Often, so, mi and do are the first notes introduced, as these are easiest to pitch and have a small range ideally suited to your child's voice. Encourage your

child to use the appropriate sign while singing the note. There are a plethora of books and videos demonstrating the teaching of this system as well as plenty of online demonstrations and resources, all easily accessible.

But what does this all mean for you as a parent? Do you need to directly teach your child pitch? And if so, which is better - absolute or relative pitch, fixed do or movable do?

The choice may come down to how important you think it is for your child to acquire perfect pitch (i.e., being able to name any note just by hearing it). As mentioned above, while many agree that it has its benefits, not all are convinced of its importance. If you would like to foster this ability, then fixed do would be the logical approach to take, since a particular pitch only ever has one name - the note "E" is always called Mi, regardless of whether the music is in C Major or G Major.

Whether you decide to focus on fixed or movable do, it makes sense to keep it simple at first, so you will probably want to start off in one key anyway (C major is the easiest, as it has no 'black notes' - sharps or flats). So for now, you can call a C 'do' and a D 're' and decide whether to move this system into other keys later on as you get more confident and knowledgeable. Using this 'fixed do' system to start with may have the added benefit of maintaining your child's perfect pitch without even meaning to do so! For more detailed discussion on this, please see Appendix Two.



*Color-coded handbells ideal for little hands*

A very visual and easy way of teaching pitch to young children is to use handbells. These can be purchased in an octave set for small hands. Particularly useful for the very youngest

are the bells that can be sounded by pressing the tops down, rather than having to actually 'ring' the bell in the traditional manner. The bells are color-coded (a different color for each note in the scale) and you can begin calling each one by their solfège name from the beginning.

In fact, any color-coded pitched instruments can be used to teach absolute or relative pitch to your young child and these can be purchased from most music educational suppliers (these pictures are from MES, who can be found online). Using the same colors on different instruments helps your child to identify specific pitches and to understand that a C (or 'do') has the same pitch, regardless of the instrument.



Playing games where you sing a note and your child finds the corresponding bell or chime bar is a simple way of developing a 'good ear' and in time they will be able to play well-known tunes by hearing the note in their head and choosing the correct colored instrument. Later introduction to reading and writing music can be easier using this method as well.

In Chapter Five, you will find some ideas for simple pitch exercises and easy games to play with your child which will develop both their absolute and relative pitch skills.

## *THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING*

As with language acquisition or the learning of any skill, listening and imitating is of central importance when learning music. It is through listening that we learn about pitch, pulse, rhythm, harmony, structure, tone and expression. Active listening aids concentration, builds self-confidence, and encourages learning. It is felt by some that even before birth, babies

can benefit from listening to calming, well-structured music, mostly of the classical variety. Whether this is true or not, it seems to relax some babies and there can be no harm in introducing your child to high-quality music in this way.

Certainly there is no shortage of commercial CDs and DVDs which all claim to make your child more intelligent and creative simply by listening. Sadly, these claims are largely unsubstantiated and imply, incorrectly, that you can simply put on a CD and magically turn your child into an overnight genius. However, active listening is important and you do not need to buy these specialist recordings to make a difference to your child. Most libraries have borrowing facilities for audio recordings or you could set up a CD-swap with a few friends so that your own collection is rotated. And there's the radio. The important thing is that your child is exposed to a broad selection of music and that you make active listening an important part of your daily routine.

Listening should not be a passive experience. Background music, while it has its place in setting mood and so on, can make your child more oblivious to sounds around them, and does not make the same kind of impact on learning that active listening does. Talk with your child about what they are hearing. Encourage them to identify when the music changes, when it is loud or quiet, high or low, fast or slow. Show them pictures of the instruments they can hear or better still, let them see live performances. Children learn through direct interaction, so dance around the room, march in time, or clap along. Above all, have fun.

But what type of music is suitable for your child to listen to? Many people advocate listening to classical music, due to its regular pulse, diatonic melodies and strong structure. Often music by Bach, Beethoven or Mozart is recommended. Other people advocate listening to children's songs, nursery rhymes and lullabies, again because of the simple structure, repetitive phrases and limited range. While both types of music should certainly form a large part of your child's listening repertoire, it is also important that your child hear a wide selection of music. They should be introduced to classical and more modern styles of music, including jazz, rock and pop, as well as folk songs and music from other cultures. Try not to be biased towards music that you like. The younger the child, the wider their taste in music, so

you may find that your one-year old loves Italian opera or your three-year old can't get enough Indonesian *gamelan* music. Anything goes, so introduce them to as much as possible. Use your library to sample music that is less familiar to you and be as open-minded as possible.

Don't worry if your child wants to listen to the same piece of music over and over again. Just as with favorite stories and rhymes, children love repetition and their brains are 'wired' to learn in this way. So while you may be fed up with the same track, your child will be building strong neural pathways and enjoying every minute!

Set aside times in the day for listening, choosing times when your child is attentive and avoiding times when they are hungry or tired. Listening could form part of your daily music time, or you might like to choose a separate time - whatever fits into your routine. Turn off any other background music or noises and choose somewhere comfortable. This should be a fun time, not a chore, so make it special and if you don't feel like it one day, leave it until the next day.

It is also important to let your child see and hear live musical performances. For very young children, going to a full-length concert will not be a viable option, as their concentration span is still short and they won't be able to sit still for long. However, there are plenty of other ways to see live music. Look out especially for local festivals and street music or for performances specifically geared to young children. When your child is old enough for a more formal concert, make it a really special occasion.

### **Things to remember when listening with your child:**

- Choose a suitable time in the day, when your child is most attentive and receptive.
- Keep it short but focused.
- Don't bombard your child with constant music. Let them experience the beauty of silence and quiet too.
- Ensure that listening time is active. Talk about the music and get involved.

- Listen to a broad range of music but be sure to include music with a clear structure and steady pulse. Our list of recommended music should help you to choose.
- Let your child see live performances where possible.
- If you sing or play an instrument, make sure that your child hears you playing.
- Don't play music too loudly to your child - their ears are a bit more sensitive than yours.
- When your child is old enough, let them have their own CD player and selection of CDs if possible, so that they can have some choice over what to listen to and when.

## *USING INSTRUMENTS*

Apart from the need for children to learn how to use their voices as instruments, children also need exposure to different types of sounds. These include everyday sounds, pitched and unpitched instruments, toy instruments, 'real' instruments and home-made instruments.

### Everyday Sounds

Make everyday sounds a focus for listening sometimes. Draw your baby's attention to unusual sounds around them. Go out on a 'sound walk' with your toddler and count how many different sounds you can hear. Make your own game of 'sound bingo' to play with your child when they are old enough, recording everyday sounds and matching them to pictures. Engage them in the world of sound.

### Home-made Instruments

Make your own instruments with your child. When they are very young, a simple set of saucepans and a wooden spoon will provide plenty of old-fashioned fun, or a box of papers for scrunching and shaking. Shakers made from old coffee canisters or tubes of sweets are easy to make and can be filled with dried beans or rice for instant effect. Glass bottles filled

with differing amounts of liquid will provide an added science lesson, as will different thicknesses of rubber bands stretched over a cereal-box for a home-made guitar. Check on the Internet for plenty of home-made instrument ideas and get making!

## Pitched and Unpitched Instruments

Traditional musical instruments are usually grouped according to whether they are 'pitched' or 'unpitched'. Pitched instruments are those that produce given notes, e.g. can play a D or an F sharp. Unpitched instruments are those that do not produce a set pitch, e.g. a shaker or a cymbal. Ideally, your child should have access to a variety of pitched and unpitched instruments. Drums, shakers, castanets, claves, glockenspiels, whistles and recorders are all inexpensive and easy to come by. Choose ones that are suitable for small hands where possible and make sure they are stored somewhere that is easily accessible for your child.

## 'Real' Instruments

Your child should also be exposed to 'real' instruments, such as flutes, violins, guitars, trumpets and keyboards where possible. This doesn't mean that you have to go out and buy a piano. But if Grandma happens to have one, see if your child can have a play next time they are visiting. Perhaps you have an old guitar that you no longer use or a violin in the attic. Unless they are starting formal lessons, your child will not be able to play these instruments 'properly', but they can be shown how the sound is made and encouraged to strum the strings or press the keys. Some instruments will of course be completely beyond their reach, such as saxophones or flutes, due to their size. However, if you have any of these instruments, let your child touch the instrument, listen to you making sounds and perhaps play along with their own child-sized instruments.

Thrift shops and garage sales often have instruments for sale at affordable prices, or you can try looking for second-hand child-sized instruments from online websites such as Amazon or eBay. You'll be surprised by what people are getting rid of!



It is important for your child to be shown how to play their instruments correctly and how to take care of them, however basic the instrument is. They should be taught that musical instruments are not toys and should be treated with respect. A great book for non-musicians on the correct technique for playing simple percussion instruments is 'Agogo Bells to Xylophone' by Maggie Cotton and Alison Dexter.

## *COMPOSING AND IMPROVISING*

One advantage children have when learning anything is their natural inquisitiveness and creativity. Fortunately, children are predisposed to learning through trial-and-error and have none of the inhibitions common amongst their adult counterparts. They are not yet afraid of sounding silly or making mistakes and therefore composing and improvising are skills that come more easily to them than to the adults around them.

As parents, we should foster this enthusiasm and encourage children to create with sound. As with listening, talk to your child about the sounds they are creating. Introduce vocabulary such as 'high', 'low', 'loud', 'soft', 'fast' and 'slow'. As they get older, encourage them to make music to match different moods or to accompany their favorite story. Play along with them and be spontaneous. Change the words to well-known songs and rhymes, or add extra verses, including silly, nonsense versions. If you have an electronic keyboard, put on one of the backing tracks and add your own rhythms and melodies. Make sure that your child sees music as something which they can have control over and express themselves with. Imagination is the only limitation.

You can record your child's music-making using a simple tape-recorder and microphone, using your computer or a hand-held Dictaphone. 'Talking tins' are a great way to record and play back short snippets of sound instantly and can be purchased online. The advantages of recording your child are two-fold. Firstly, they can listen back, feel proud of themselves and talk about their music. They could even make their own CD to add to your family collection, thereby gaining a real sense of themselves as a musician. Secondly, as

they get older, keeping recordings of their music creates a lovely record of their musical development for you as a parent to look back on.

In this chapter, we have looked at some of the key elements of making music with your child but two messages above all should stand out:

*Expose your child to a rich musical environment.*

*Have fun making music together.*

If you take nothing else away from this chapter or this book, these two points alone will set a strong foundation for learning and ensure that music is a part of your child's life forever.

# CHAPTER 4

## METHODS AND APPROACHES

The traditional, classical approach to music education begins at around the age of 6 or 7, often later. Grounded in theory, and the learning of a particular instrument, the skills of reading and writing music are central to the approach, making it often unsuitable for very young children. However, as we have discussed, young children are in fact ideally suited to musical learning and many people feel that the classical model of music education starts too late. In this chapter, we look at several key music education movements which can all be used to teach musical skills to the very youngest.

### *THE SUZUKI METHOD*

The Suzuki Method is a system of music education based on the philosophy of a Japanese violinist and educator, Dr. Shinichi Suzuki (1898-1998). Analyzing the way in which very young children learn to speak, the method was designed to enrich lives and sensitivity. Suzuki believed that all children were born with musical ability and the method aims to nurture this so that children can fulfill their innate potential. Given appropriate training and a stimulating musical environment, Suzuki believed that any child could acquire a very high level of musical mastery.



Indeed, the method has produced a great many skilled musicians at what, to many, seems an impossibly early age.

Initially a method of learning the violin, the system has now been applied to a variety of instruments, including viola, 'cello, piano, flute and recorder.

More than 250,000 students across 40 countries are currently learning to play an instrument via the Suzuki Method.

The Suzuki Method is distinguishable from other music education systems in several key ways:

- **An early start.** Ideally, the Suzuki Method is begun before the age of five, usually at about 3-4, much earlier than conventional classical training.
- **Listening.** Before learning any given piece, students are required to listen to recordings of the piece. Only after the child has been playing for a certain amount of time will written music be introduced. The intention is that this will develop a good 'ear' for pitch and tone, enabling greater expression within the music.
- **Trained teachers.** All Suzuki teachers are trained not only as performers, but also as teachers, learning about child psychology and learning difficulties, for example.
- **Learning from demonstration.** An essential feature of the Suzuki Method is listening to others. So much so, that a child may observe other students playing for several months before playing anything themselves, giving them role models to aspire to and an acceptance of performing in public.
- **Common repertoire.** For each instrument, there is a set repertoire (increasing in complexity) which every Suzuki student studies in the same order.
- **Complete Mastery.** Suzuki students are required to play from memory and revisit older pieces to work on technique and musicality. Learning the notes is merely the beginning and they therefore spend much longer on any one piece of music than their classically-trained counterparts.
- **Group Lessons.** As well as having a private weekly music lesson, a student of the Suzuki Method attends a weekly group lesson, learning through social interaction and developing their listening and performance skills in another dimension.
- **Parental Involvement.** Parents play a crucial role in the Suzuki Method and are expected to attend lessons, take notes and even practice daily with their children.
- **Public Performance.** From an early age, Suzuki students are encouraged to perform in public, often in concerts arranged by their teachers. This early exposure reduces any 'stage-fright' and shows music as a shared, social activity.



Despite the obvious benefits of learning to play via the Suzuki method, there have always been a number of criticisms leveled at the system. The most common of these, however, could also be viewed as one of its main strengths - that of learning to play by ear, rather than by reading music. While Suzuki students do learn to read music, this is introduced much later, only after a solid foundation of posture, tone and technique is in place, similar to the way children traditionally learn to read after they have mastered speech. Since children typically start the Suzuki

Method much earlier than classical training, it is perhaps more appropriate to focus more on listening than reading. In today's youth bands and orchestras, however, sight reading from sheet music is a necessary skill, as well as being indispensable for everyday performance of new material, and some people feel that Suzuki students do not gain enough experience of sight reading to function well in these types of situations.

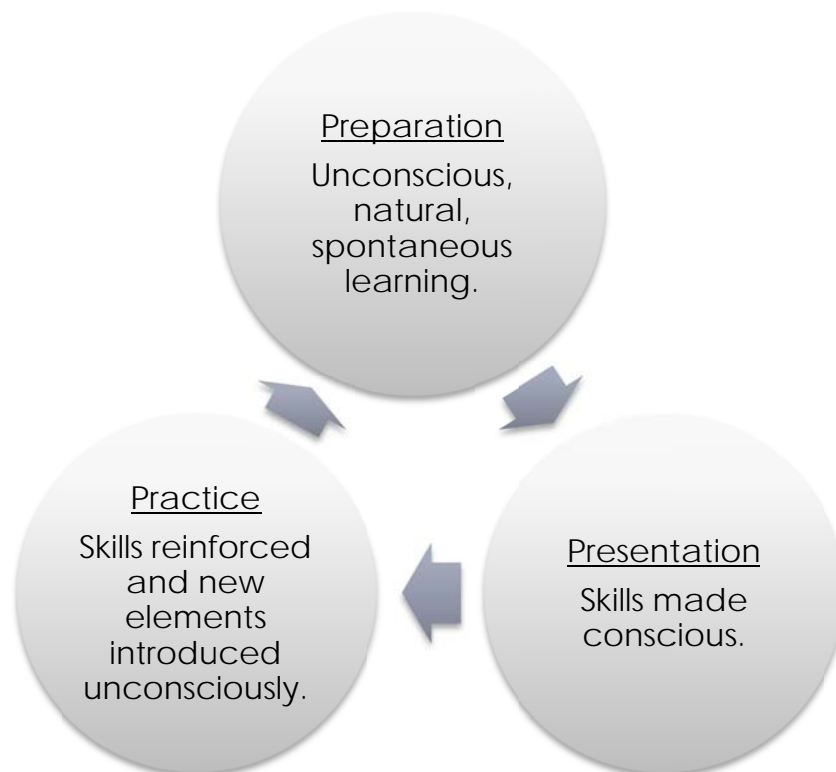
The advantages, of course, are of memorization and developing a 'good ear'. It is certainly true that memorizing music allows more focus on freedom of expression and technique. When memorization is part of everyday practice, it can also limit nerves in public performance and increase self-confidence. And playing by ear to a high level of accuracy is a skill that the majority of classically-trained musicians would love to possess to a greater degree and cannot be overemphasized. We have discussed the benefits of developing a 'good ear' and the Suzuki Method fully embraces and cultivates this.

Another criticism of the Suzuki Method is a tendency towards 'mechanized' playing and a lack of musical interpretation. Some people feel that this is due to the emphasis placed upon listening to others' performances of set pieces, encouraging copying over personal expression. However, the Suzuki Method places no less importance on expression and sensitivity than does classical training. Certainly it is the case that some classically-trained musicians can also be a 'slave to the music', by simply playing the notes on the page, rather than the music itself. Perhaps it would be fairer to say that some people produce more 'mechanized' playing, regardless of the system in which they have been taught.

# THE KODÁLY CONCEPT

The Kodály concept of learning music is a child-centered, sequential approach based on singing and a country's own folksong material. In this way, it removes the technical difficulties associated with the learning of an instrument and is immediately accessible to everyone, including the very youngest. By using the voice rather than an instrument, the core skills of musical memory, inner hearing, true intonation and harmonic hearing are developed subconsciously and spontaneously, and are seen as a prerequisite for future instrumental study. Using the voice is the quickest and most natural way to achieve this.

Based on the work of Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), the approach is used from birth to professional level and is based around the belief that a musician should have a well-trained ear, intelligence and heart, as well as well-trained fingers. Inspired by the work of various other music education systems, Kodály believed that music should be accessible to all and that folk music in particular, has a crucial role to play in complete musical development. He identified three main steps in the learning sequence:



## Stage One - Subconscious Learning

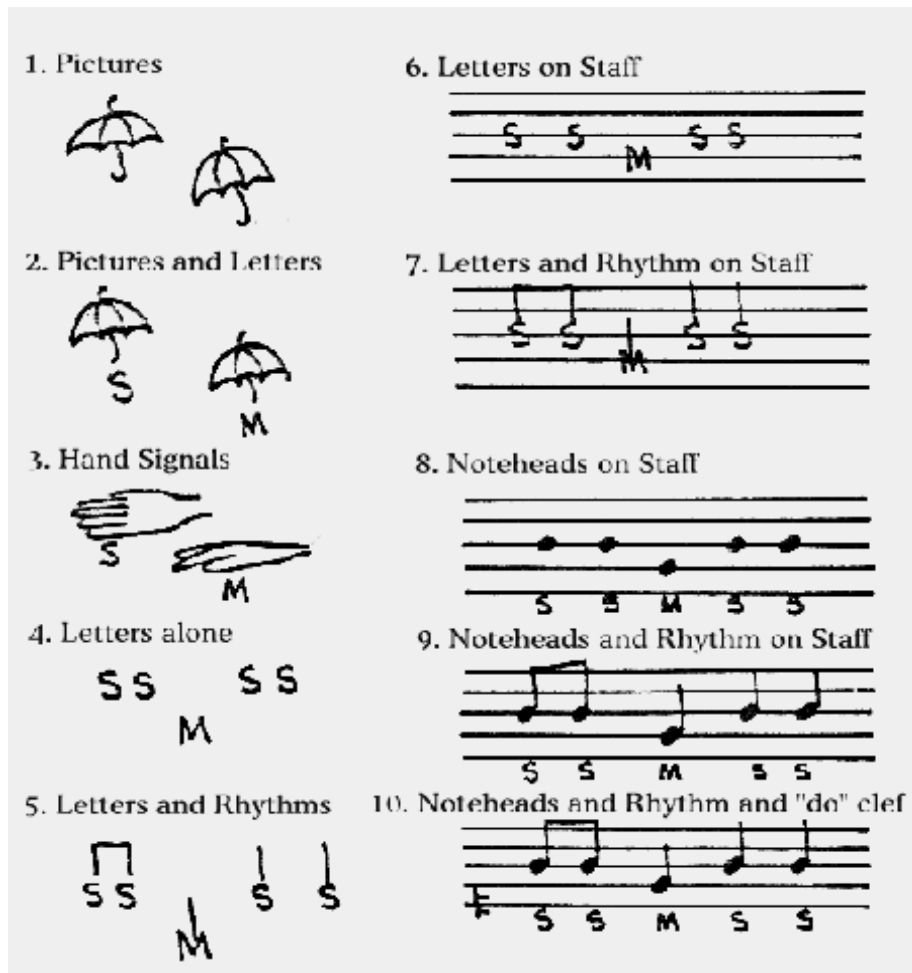
***'Music education begins nine months before the birth of the Mother.'***  
**- Zoltan Kodaly**

This stage is characterized by the playing of musical games and learning of songs in the mother tongue. Music is taught in the way that children learn naturally. It is fun and spontaneous, based on imitation and reflective of the way in which children learn their native language. Children develop pulse, then rhythm through the use of rhythm syllables and movement games. They develop an awareness of pitch (higher, lower, remaining the same). When this stage is revisited, more advanced skills can be introduced, such as part singing, memory development and improvisation.

## Stage Two - Making the Learning Conscious

Children learn the appropriate vocabulary and use of symbols to represent what they have already learned subconsciously. They learn rhythmic notation, begin sol-fa (or solfège) training using hand signs and learn to read and write music initially with stick notation (see below). Gradually, pitch names are introduced and pupils learn to read in all seven do positions.

***'A child who plays an instrument before he sings may remain unmusical for a lifetime. That is why we encounter so many skilful pianists who have no idea of the essence of music.'***  
**- Zoltan Kodaly**



Reading music is introduced via a series of small, sequential steps. Pictorial representations, followed by the addition of sol-fa letters, lead to hand signs, stick notation and eventually pitches on the staff.

The use of rhythm syllables and hand signs are particularly important parts of the Kodály concept. Rhythm syllables help children to develop a natural sense of rhythm, without the artificial construction of abstract names. Hand signs are a means of representing pitch in a physical and therefore concrete way. The signs themselves were not created by Kodály but are utilized extensively by teachers of

Symbol	Rhythm Name
	ta
	ti-ti
	---
	tika-tika
	too
	ti-tika
	tika-ti
	tum-ti
	syn-co-pa
	tim-ka




the Kodály concept.


IV THE STANDARD COURSE.

### MANUAL SIGNS OF TONE IN KEY.


NOTE.—The diagrams show the hand as seen from the left of the teacher, not as seen from the front. Teachers should particularly notice this.




**soh**  
The GRAND or *bright* tone.




**te**  
The PIERCING or *sensitive* tone.




**me**  
The STEADY or *calm* tone.




**doh**  
The STRONG or *firm* tone.



**ray**  
The ROUSING or *hopeful* tone.



**lah**  
The SAD or *weeping* tone.



**fah**  
The DESOLATE or *awe-inspiring* tone.

For *fe*, let the teacher point his first finger horizontally to the left. For *ta*, ditto to the right. To the class these positions will be reversed, and will correspond with the Modulator. For *so*, let the teacher point his fore-finger straight towards the class.

*Hand signs used in the Kodály concept*

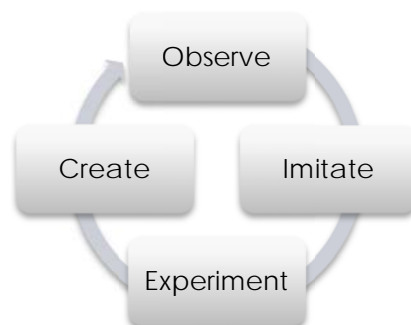
# THE ORFF APPROACH

Developed by the German composer Carl Orff (1895-1982), the Orff approach (or Orff-Schulwerk) is based around a child-centered philosophy which combines music, dance, speech and drama in a simple and natural way. Sometimes called 'Elemental Music Making', it starts with the assertion that learning music has much in common with learning a language and that the most important part of music is rhythm, this being the fundamental element that speech, music and movement all have in common. It places a great deal of emphasis on creating a relaxed and non-competitive learning environment in which children are able to be creative and express themselves freely. All learning is through active participation and children do not learn to read or write music until they have a basic feeling for rhythm and melody. Improvisation and student composition are a central part of the experience.

The Orff approach differs from the Suzuki Method and the Kodály concept in that there is no set step-by-step, linear progression of learning to follow or grades to complete. Instead, teachers follow the overall philosophy of the approach and include stages such as:

1. Imitation
2. Exploration
3. Literacy
4. Improvisation
5. Composition
6. Visualization

In essence, the approach follows the general cycle:



The central focus of the Orff approach is rhythm because this is seen as the primal musical element, and is naturally accessible and familiar to children. Movement, dance and drama are therefore used extensively and children are required to clap, march, tap fingers, use body percussion (such as knee tapping) and sing. Music is built up in complexity using variations of simple rhythmic patterns.

Singing is very important to the Orff approach, with songs typically being short and often nationalistic. They are sung in groups and individually and are often adapted to be sung as a round. Songs are memorized using solfège and hand signs.

Orff instruments include miniature xylophones, marimbas, glockenspiels and vibraphones (with removable bars for ease of use by very young children), drums, recorders and non-pitched percussion such as shakers and claves. All instruments are therefore easily accessible to younger children and most are played with the whole hand, rather than the fingers (e.g. a xylophone is played with two hands, in comparison with a piano, which is played with ten fingers). This makes the physical part of playing the instrument easier and allows for greater focus on rhythm, pitch and musicality.

## *THE YAMAHA METHOD*

Developed in Japan in the 1950s and influenced by Kodály and Orff, the Yamaha Method is a system of music education which aims to develop all-round musicality in a fun and sociable atmosphere. Children learn to play the electronic keyboard as a tool to this musical development, rather than a goal in itself.

Like the Suzuki and Orff methods, the Yamaha system is based on music as a type of language and as such places a great emphasis on listening first and learning through imitation. Learning to read and write music comes at a later stage. Developing a 'good ear' and a keen sense of rhythm are therefore the very basis of the system:



However, each of these levels of learning may take place within one lesson and notation is usually introduced from the very first session. For example, in one lesson children may listen to a particular rhythm, sing that rhythm, play it on the keyboard and then go on to learn how that rhythm is notated.

Students usually participate in weekly group lessons of up to ten children, accompanied by the parent, who is a crucial partner in the whole learning process. Lessons include a mixture of activities such as singing, solfège, ear training, electronic keyboard playing, ensemble work, music appreciation and improvisation. Much use is made of accompanying CD tracks, which children use at home along with set books and repertoire.

Because of the manual dexterity required to play the keyboard, children do not start learning the Yamaha Method until they are four years of age. The children are grouped according to age and the lessons are tailored to them accordingly.

## *A MIXED APPROACH*

With the many advantages and disadvantages of each system, the choice to start formal music training on a particular instrument can be overwhelming and for this reason is often a decision that a lot of parents defer until their child is older. If the above approaches seem a step too far, do not despair. A more relaxed, informal approach might be the way to incorporate music into your child's life. The benefits of early music-making are enormous, whether your child is learning Suzuki violin or singing at home with you.

Interestingly, several common threads permeate all the above approaches and would seem to be critical in engaging in any kind of music-making with your young child. All can be easily fitted into your everyday life. These are:

- A focus on listening and imitation
- The importance of singing
- The emphasis of developing a 'good ear'
- Regular practice
- A relaxed environment
- Involvement of parents in the learning process
- Teaching from what your child already knows
- Having fun

Whichever method you choose, in Chapter Five, you will find practical activities to help you get started. These activities are based largely on the above areas of music learning and can be adapted for different situations and ages. You do not need any special equipment, nor do you need to be able to read music or play an instrument. Time, patience and a readiness to 'give it a try' are all the requirements. Enjoy!

# CHAPTER 5

## SO WHERE DO I START?

### *PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES*

In this chapter, we give you some practical ideas to get you started. It is important to stress that activities should always start from what children already know and can already do, not what we would like them to be able to do. Activities should be fun and child-centered. It is no good trying to coerce a preschool child into making music - this will result in frustration for you and turn the child away from music making.

Each activity in this chapter is designed to be carried out by you and your child together. Some of the ideas can be used as quick two-minute activities that you can use while in the car, shopping or going about your daily routines. Others are better suited to a more focused music session. Where an activity works better with two or more children, this is indicated.

For ease of use, we have chosen to group the activities into approximate age ranges. However, all children develop at different rates, musically and otherwise, and you may find activities from one of the other sections are more appropriate for you and your child. This is absolutely fine. In fact, it is a good idea to revisit activities from earlier sections to celebrate success and provide a sense of achievement and mastery.

**In each of the sections, activities cover some of the following:**

- ♪ Action songs, rhymes and singing games
- ♪ Games for listening
- ♪ Rhythm activities
- ♪ Solfège and pitch activities

- ♪ Links with story, dance and art
- ♪ Musical games with props
- ♪ Games with simple instruments
- ♪ Recording music
- ♪ 2-minute activities
- ♪ Musical activities for several children, party games etc.

### **General Tips:**

- Ideally you will be able to set aside a regular 'music time', as well as incorporating musical activities into your daily routine. During 'music time', ensure that all background music or sound is turned off, e.g. TV, radio, and that you are in a comfortable place, ideally with soft furnishings, carpet etc. to limit the amount of echo from hard surfaces. While this time doesn't have to be every day, it does need to be a regular occurrence. Ten minutes every day is more beneficial than an hour once a week. Little and often works best.
- Try to sing something every day, ideally unaccompanied.
- Try to listen to music every day or two.
- Repetition is crucial to learning. Sing favorite songs and repeat favorite activities again and again.
- Children learn by imitation. Remember that your child's main role model is you. Show your child that you enjoy making music and they will want to copy you.
- Ensure that your child has access to a rich musical environment with plenty of listening material, instruments, everyday sounds etc. As they get older, they should be able to select instruments and music themselves, rather than relying on you to provide this.

## ACTIVITIES FOR LITTLE CHILDREN

### Action Songs, Rhymes and Singing Games:

At this stage, these are the most important types of musical activity and you probably already do much of this without thinking about it. You should sing to your baby every day while maintaining eye contact, ideally unaccompanied. Nappy changing time, feeding time, bath-time and bedtime all provide easy opportunities for this.

#### Some ideas for songs are:

**'Row, Row, Row Your Boat'** - Sit on the floor with your little one sitting facing you. Hold hands and rock backwards and forwards in time to the music, as you sing the song.

**'If You're Happy And You Know It'** - Encourage your little one to join in with simple actions, e.g. clapping hands, patting head, stamping feet or touching nose. Add any actions you think your baby will find funny, such as "If you're happy and you know it, say boo!" or "If you're happy and you know it, have a tickle!"

**'Head, Shoulders Knees and Toes'** - Again, encourage your child to motion to the respective parts of the body as the song is sung, and guide your child's hands if necessary.

**'Incy Wincy Spider'** - The actions to this song might be challenging for very young children but try to have them follow along nevertheless. Search YouTube for many examples of how you can motion along to this song.

### Games for Listening



**Bounce** your baby on your knee as you listen to music, or dance around the room with them in your arms. Adjust your movements according to the type of music, e.g. slow and gentle or fast and bouncy.

**Listen** to soothing and calming music at bedtime and livelier, up-tempo music in the mornings.

**Copying games** are great for developing both listening and turn-taking skills. Use body percussion such as clapping or knee tapping and leave a gap for your baby to copy you. This will prepare your baby for later call-and-response games and songs.

## Rhythm Activities

**Tap the pulse** - As you sing a familiar nursery rhyme, tap lightly in your baby's palm or on the sole of their foot, in time to the music. This works well when they are lying down on the change table.

**Clap along** to the music as you sing and finish off with a round of applause and a big smile. In time, your baby will start to join in.

**Take turns to play** - Encourage your baby to use a small drum and beater. Take turns to play; when it's your turn, beat out a steady beat. You can incorporate some solfège into this by singing 'do do do' (at the appropriate pitch) at a steady tempo and then beating the drum three times at the same tempo.

## Solfège and Pitch Activities

**Perfect Pitch and Solfège** - If you want your baby to maintain or develop perfect pitch, it may help to make sure that you always sing particular songs starting on a given note. You

may also want to sing key notes in solfège as you go around the house, e.g. 'do do so so do' or 'do re mi fa so, so fa mi re do' at the appropriate pitches, just so that your baby gets used to hearing the notes and the solfège syllables. Use the hand symbols too.

If you have a piano, keyboard or chime bar, play a C and sing the note to 'do'. Keep repeating this intermittently so that your baby regularly hears the note and associates 'do' with this sound. Add in 'so' for G and 'mi' for E when you feel this is appropriate.

## Musical Games with Props

**'Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush'** - Use different words to fit with what you are doing at the time, e.g. 'This is the way we brush our teeth'. You could use props, e.g. toothbrush, hairbrush to demonstrate each action, thereby developing your baby's word association skills at the same time.

Other songs such as 'Incy Wincy Spider' are well suited to using props, be it soft toys, building bricks, scarves, ribbons or bubbles. Just use your imagination!

**Musical Socks** - You can purchase socks or booties for your baby which make a sound when your baby kicks or bells for their wrists or ankles. These can also be easily made by sewing small bells to your baby's socks. Just make sure they are securely fastened.

**Musical Toys** - Your baby will probably have toys that make sounds, such as rattles, bells or electronic instruments that make a sound when they are hit, kicked or pushed. All of these are great for your baby's awareness of different sounds and you can use them to play simple turn-taking games.

## Games with Simple Instruments

**Everyday Sounds** - Let your child experiment with the sounds that everyday objects make. Draw their attention to unusual sounds when you are out and about too.

**Sound Canisters** - Fill small opaque containers such as film canisters with things that make a sound and let your baby play with these. He/she will be surprised that they make different sounds.

**Play simple instruments** with your baby such as drums, shakers and rattles. Take it in turns to play.

**'Real' Instruments** - If you have access to a piano or guitar, let your baby experiment with pressing the keys or strumming the strings. Encourage them to treat the instrument gently, rather than banging the keys or strings.

## Recording Music

Use a simple recording device to record your baby's early attempts at singing and playing instruments. It may not seem much now, but as your baby develops, you will start to see some elements of pitch and rhythm begin to form. Your baby will be interested to listen to her own voice or music when you play the music back to her.

## *ACTIVITIES FOR SEVERAL CHILDREN*

While true collaboration is not feasible for babies, they can still start to develop a sense of music as a social activity. If you have other children at home or meet up with other parents and babies, try some of the following:

**Parachute Games** - Sit in a circle with a parachute or large piece of fabric spread out in the middle. Sit your baby on your lap and together hold onto the edge of the parachute. Play some music and move the parachute gently up and down in time to the music. Adjust your movements according to the music you have selected, e.g.:

- Bigger movements for increased volume
- Bigger movements for higher pitch
- Faster movements for increased tempo
- Throw the parachute up in the air at any 'musical surprises'

**Baby Orchestra** - Give each baby an instrument, show them how to use it and let them freely experiment. If you have an older child, they could be the 'conductor' and decide on signals for 'loud' and 'quiet' or 'fast' and 'slow'. Sit your baby on your lap. When the signal is given, help them to play in the appropriate way.

**Stop/Start** - As above, but with a signal for 'stop' and one for 'start'. This game works well for toddlers too, who will be able to watch the 'conductor' themselves and start or stop at the right times.

**Circle Games** - Sit in a circle and pass an instrument around. When it is your baby's turn, help them to play the instrument and pass it on. This will develop turn-taking and social skills as well as listening.

Also, sing your favorite songs and rhymes together, with actions. For now, it will be the parents who are the main participants but in time and with encouragement, the babies will start to join in too.

# ACTIVITIES FOR TODDLERS

## Action Songs, Rhymes and Singing Games

As well as singing the songs in the previous section, other action rhymes to add to your child's repertoire include:

- 'I'm a Little Teapot'
- 'Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes'
- 'Ring Around the Rosie' or 'Ring-a-Ring-o-Roses'
- 'The Grand Old Duke of York' - Great for marching and drumming!

Other songs you could try include:

- 'She'll be Coming Round the Mountain' - A good song for changing the words to fit what you're doing at the time.
- 'A Sailor Went to Sea, Sea, Sea' - Add in some rhythmic partner-clapping when your child is familiar with the song.
- 'Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious' - Your child will love the novelty of the word and the increased tempo at the end of the song.

**Call and Response (Echo) Songs** - are a great way to encourage and develop your child's singing. Use tunes like 'Frères Jacques' (or "Are You Sleeping?") which have natural repetition. Learn the tune first by humming, as this will also develop breath control. Once your child knows the song, try changing the words and let your toddler make up their own versions. Try to keep the notes between middle C and the A above, as young children have a limited vocal range. Your child will try to join in when it is your turn first, so they will need plenty of practice to get the hang of these types of song.

Substitute your child's name into well-known songs for a personalized touch!

**How Many Ways?** - How many different ways can you sing one simple nursery rhyme? Try changing the words to 1, 2, 3, 4 or a, b, c, d. Sing it all staccato (short and spiky) or legato (smooth and flowing).

## *GAMES FOR LISTENING*

**Find the Bell** - fill small opaque containers with different sounds and play 'find the bell' sound. This will encourage your toddler to listen carefully.

**Everyday Sounds** - Collect together a range of everyday items which make varied sounds, e.g. a bowl of water, a newspaper, a zip, a box of cereal. Get your child to look away and make a sound with one of the items. The child must guess which item made the sound. Then swap over and let your child make the sound.

**Guess the Instrument** - Play an instrument behind your back. Your child tries to guess which instrument it is. You can also encourage number skills by playing a certain amount of regular beats and asking your child to count the number of sounds.

## *RHYTHM ACTIVITIES*

**Clap and march to the beat** when listening to music and sometimes when singing.

**Copying Activities** - Clap a simple rhythm to your child and ask them to repeat it. Gradually increase the length and complexity of the phrase. The game can be extended to include:

- Body percussion such as knee tapping or patting your head.
- Untuned percussion instruments such as drums.

- Voice percussion (where you use different 'sound effects' such as "dum", "pow" or "wheee!").
- Rhythm syllables (see Chapter Three where these are used with the Kodály concept). You can also make up your own with real or nonsense words, e.g. "coffee, coffee, tea".

As well as encouraging a good sense of rhythm, this type of game is excellent for your child's listening skills.

**Roll a ball** back and forth between you and your toddler as you sing familiar songs. Make sure that each roll is in time with the pulse of the music.

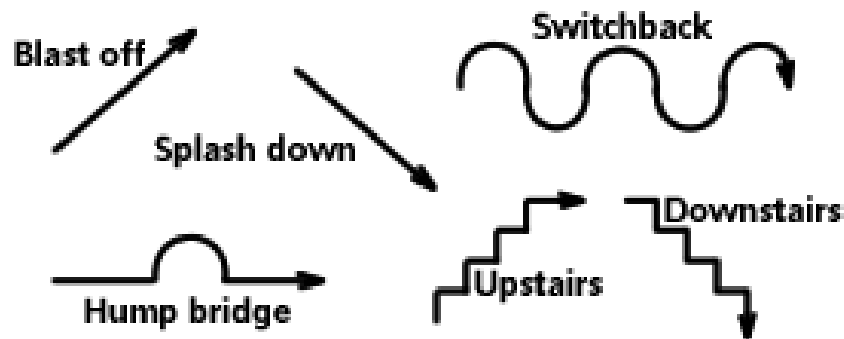
Use **Action Rhymes** that have actions on a steady beat to reinforce the concept of pulse. 'One Potato, Two Potato' is good for this.

## *SOLFÈGE AND PITCH ACTIVITIES*

**Copying Activities** - As above, copying games can also be used to develop pitch. Start off using your voice and sing a simple phrase. Your child echoes you. Use solfège syllables and hand symbols too. If you have a tuned instrument such as a piano or glockenspiel, you can also play very simple phrases which your child then copies on the same instrument. Your child will start to tell when they make a mistake. This activity is quite challenging, so give lots of praise when your child gets it right.

Continue **singing in solfège** as you go around the house. You can use this as an on-the-go call-and-response activity now that your child is a bit older. When they are able to, they can repeat single notes or phrases back to you. As well as sung notes, if you have a piano or other tuned instrument, practice playing a note which your child sings back to you.

Play '**Blast Off**' - Crouch down low with your child. Sing or hum a low note. As you both stand up, raise the pitch of the note until you 'blast off'. Try with 'splash down'. Once your child understands the principle, use hand movements to indicate changes in pitch:



## *LINKS WITH STORY, DANCE AND ART*

Let children **dance freely** to recorded music. Add **props** such as scarves, balloons, bubbles or ribbons.

Add musical **sound effects** to favorite stories or songs, e.g. the giant's footsteps in 'Jack and the Beanstalk' or the striking of the clock in 'Hickory Dickory Dock'. Let your child select appropriate instruments and as they get more confident, increase the number of effects and the type (e.g. by repeating a certain pattern of notes to represent a particular character). You could even record yourselves with you reading the words and your toddler adding the sound effects. Your child will get a great sense of satisfaction from listening to the recording at story-time or before they go to bed.

Stories that are particularly well suited to adding musical effects are 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' by Helen Oxenbury and 'Peace at Last' by Jill Murphy as well as the majority of classic fairy tales.



**Make simple instruments** out of junk modeling materials. Shakers are probably the easiest for toddlers to make, by filling old (lidded) containers with dried peas or beans. With a bit of help, they can paint the outside and use their instrument to play along to recorded music.

## *MUSICAL GAMES WITH PROPS*

**Traffic Light Games** - Make a 'traffic light' out of a large cardboard circle. Color one side red and one side green, or you can cut circles out of colored paper and paste it on the cardboard. There are endless options for games to play with this simple prop and you will soon be making your own up. Some games to start with are:

- **Let your child play an instrument.** When you turn the traffic light to red, they must stop playing, when it switches back to green, they can start to play again.
- **Ask your child to sing a familiar song.** When the traffic light is red, they stop, when it is green, they start. You may have to sing together to start with. When your child is good at this game, they can sing silently in their head when the light is red, picking up the song at the right place when the light is green.
- **Play some music.** Your child dances, stopping or starting when the traffic light changes.
- Make sure that your child gets a turn to control the 'traffic light' too!

## *GAMES WITH SIMPLE INSTRUMENTS*

**Taking Turns** - Play a short phrase and then pass the instrument to your child. They can make their own phrase up and then pass the instrument back.

**Copycat** - As above, but your child copies your phrase. This takes a bit of practice, so give lots of praise and encouragement. Make sure they get to create their own phrases too.

**Keyboard Fun** - If you have an electronic keyboard, show your toddler how to change the voice sound. They will be surprised and amused by some of the effects. Play the same tune with different instruments.

## *RECORDING MUSIC*

If you have a child-proof CD player and microphone, you can start to introduce your child to recording their own music and sounds. Let them record freely and play the sounds back for them to hear. Go on a walk around the house and record any sounds you hear or can make. Play back the sounds. Increase your child's vocabulary by naming the sounds you hear. Once they can talk, they may be able to identify some of the easier sounds themselves or find the place where the sound came from.

## *TWO-MINUTE ACTIVITIES*

**Singing games** are ideal activities for long walks or car rides. Songs are a great way to focus your child's attention and have the added benefit of relieving any tension and preventing tantrums!

**Copying games** are also easy to do while your child is sitting in a shopping cart at the supermarket or while riding the bus. Use singing (if you feel up to singing in public!) or body percussion like tapping knees or clapping.

## *MUSICAL ACTIVITIES FOR SEVERAL CHILDREN*

Some **action songs** lend themselves well to singing with several children:

- 'The Wheels on the Bus'
- 'Five Little Speckled Frogs'
- 'The Hokey-Pokey'
- 'Sally the Camel'

**Circle Games** - When you have more children, you can play games sitting or standing in a circle. For example:

**Pass the Paper** - How quietly can you pass a single sheet of paper around the circle? Count the amount of times it makes a sound. Can you do it silently? This is harder than it sounds!

**Traffic Light Activities** - As above, these also work well with several children together.

You can start to introduce games like **Musical Statues (Freeze Dance)** and **Musical Chairs**, in a simplified form. Your toddlers probably won't understand about winning or losing and probably won't stop dancing even when they're 'out', so instead play a simple game of start/stop. When the music stops, the children freeze in position (or sit down for Musical Chairs). When they are a bit older, the rules can be adapted.

# ACTIVITIES FOR 3-5 YEAR OLDS

## Action Songs, Rhymes and Singing Games

Now that your child is becoming more familiar with call-and-response songs, let them be the leader sometimes. Encourage them to create their own songs too, however silly!

As your child learns songs, lower the volume of your singing so that you do not overpower them. This will enable them to have ownership over their own singing and become confident in their own ability.

**'Boom Chicka Boom'** - Say the following call-and-response rhyme. It is spoken, rather than sung, but should be rhythmic. Your child says the words in italics.

*Say Boom Chicka Boom*

*Boom Chicka Boom*

*Say Boom Chicka Boom*

*Boom Chicka Boom*

*Say Boom Chicka Rocka Chicka Rocka Chicka Boom*

*Boom Chicka Rocka Chicka Rocka Chicka Boom*

*Aha*

*Aha*

*Hmm hmm*

*Hmm hmm*

*Say it again*

*Say it again*

**SLOWER**

*Slower*

Repeat the rhyme, changing your voice each time, e.g. slower, faster, higher, lower, squeaky, growl-like or posh (children love this one!).

## *GAMES FOR LISTENING*

**Hunt the Thimble** - Hide a small object somewhere in the room. Your child must find the object by listening to your clues. Hum a note softly. When your child gets closer, raise the volume of your humming; when they are further away, lower the volume. Swap roles once they have found the object. The game also works well with pitch or tempo (e.g. slow or fast tapping on knees).

**Sound Matching** - Fill small opaque containers such as film canisters with things that make a sound. You could try dried beans, peas, rice, pasta, small bells or even water. Fill two containers with the same items to create matching pairs. Your child needs to find out which containers sound the same just by shaking them. This game can be tricky, so start off with only a few containers and make the sounds very distinctive. Once your child gets more skilful at matching the sounds, add more containers and sounds that are more similar.

**Conductor Games** - Let your child be the conductor while you play or sing. Different games you could try are:

- Play an instrument. On a given signal from your child, stop playing and then start again on a second signal. Add signals for volume (loud/quiet/getting louder/getting quieter), pitch (high/low/getting higher/getting lower), tempo (fast/slow/getting faster/getting slower) or elements of expression (e.g. happy, sad, scared, excited). You can use this opportunity to extend your child's vocabulary too.
- Sing a song. On a given signal from your child, stop singing and then start again on a second signal. You could either 'freeze' the music or continue singing 'in your head' during the silent interval.

- If you have more than one musician, your child can allocate different 'instructions' to different people. Emphasize that they mustn't talk but must communicate through gestures and facial expression alone.

**Musical Bingo** - For this game, you will need photographs or pictures of musical instruments in your house. Copy these pictures onto cards to create bingo cards. Make sure that each one has some different instruments on so that you won't win at the same time! Behind a screen, play one of the instruments. You and your child see whether there is a picture of the instrument on your bingo cards. If there is, cover it with a counter. Move onto the next sound. The first person to cover all their pictures wins the game. You could play this game with pre-recorded sounds, e.g. of orchestral instruments or with real-life sounds and pictures, e.g. fire engine siren, telephone ringing.

You should start to let your child **select music** for listening when possible.

When listening to recorded music, encourage your child to try to **identify the instruments** playing. Use photographs of instruments in a book or printed from a computer.

Go to hear **live music**. Choose the type of performance carefully. Street music and festivals are usually low-key and easy to come and go from, so make good first introductions to live music-making. Theatre events are sometimes geared to young children or have special 'noisy' performances where it won't matter too much if your little one fidgets or tries to join in! If there is a story, read it beforehand so that your child knows what's going on. Make sure that your child knows what to expect in terms of what will happen, how long it will last and what kind of behavior is expected, especially if you are going to a formal, sitting-down type of concert. Make sure that you make it a special event - perhaps wear something smart or take photos of your day to put in an album.

## *LINKS WITH STORY, DANCE AND ART*

**Making simple instruments** - Rattles, shakers, guitars etc. Guitars are easily made by making a sound hole in the center of a cereal box and stretching elastic bands of varying thicknesses around the box. This then provides an opportunity for a discussion about pitch and an impromptu science experiment!

Stories to add musical **sound effects** to:

- **'The Gruffalo'** by Julia Donaldson. For this story, you could allocate particular instruments or even certain musical phrases to certain characters according to their personalities.
- **'The Three Billy Goats Gruff'** - You could add the element of pitch into this for each billy goat and the troll, as well as the repeated 'trip trap' rhythm.

**Inspiration** - Books, art, and films can inspire creativity. Watch the Disney film 'Fantasia' (which gives a 'story' to famous classical music works) and talk about the links between the music and the images. Use the film as a stimulus for your own artwork and musical creations.

**Soundscape** - Create your own 'soundscape' from a picture or a poem. For example, look at a painting together of the seaside. Discuss the kinds of sounds there might be at the seaside and the type of feelings you might have if you were in the picture. Then choose appropriate instruments, body percussion and vocal sounds to fit the scene. Improvise together, recording yourselves if possible. Listen back to the recording while looking at the painting. You could draw your own picture or make a collage as a starting point.

## *RHYTHM ACTIVITIES*

**Copying Activities** - Extend some of the games included in the toddler section. Children learn through imitation, so copying games are a crucial part of their musical development. Rhythmic phrases can now be longer and you can start to include more than one instrument, for example:



**Catch the Beat** - Clap a steady beat of eight notes and see whether your child can 'catch' the beat by clapping the next eight beats at the same pulse. 'Throw' the beat backwards and forwards between you. Try at different tempos.

**Feel the Beat** - Once your child can clap along to the beat securely, you can start to add a different rhythm on top of their steady beat. To start with, they will automatically adjust their playing to be the same as yours. If you have another adult, this is easier to introduce, as you can help your child to keep the beat steady while the other adult adds in the second rhythm. Keep this second rhythm very simple and repetitive to start with, as this is a very challenging activity for your preschool child. Another way to introduce this is with spoken words:

Part Two    Coff-ee   Coff-ee   Coff-ee   Coff-ee

Part One    Tea    Tea    Tea    Tea

## *SOLFÈGE AND PITCH ACTIVITIES*



At this age, your child may already know how to play the mimicking game of singing back specific notes which you sing to her (she may even be able to sing 'do' in perfect pitch if this is an activity you have practiced in the past.) The mainstay of pitch training is copying activities, which you should continue to focus on, increasing the length and complexity of phrases and extending the vocal range when appropriate (although not too much, so that you don't strain your child's voice).

In addition to this, there are some other activities you could try:

- **Drone** - See if your child can sing the same note repeatedly while you sing the melody part of a simple song, e.g. 'Jingle Bells'.
- **Stand Up/Sit Down** - Use a glockenspiel or xylophone vertically to demonstrate low to high pitch or a picture of a ladder or steps. Play two notes and ask your child to stand up if the second note was higher, sit down if it was lower or stay the same if it didn't change.
- If you have been using **solfège hand symbols** regularly, your child may be able to sing notes simply by following your hand signs. Try starting with 'so', 'mi' and 'do', adding more symbols as your child masters this skill. Once they are really good at this, you can surprise them by signing familiar, simple tunes, e.g. 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star', which will give them a real sense of satisfaction.

## *RECORDING MUSIC*

By now, your child may well be able to record themselves making music. Some simple tools which they may be able to use are:

- A hand-held Dictaphone or MP3 recording device
- A microphone plugged into a computer

- The record function on a cassette player
- A 'talking-tin'

They will have great fun going round the house recording any sounds they find and adding their own vocal effects. If you are computer-literate, a program like 'Audacity' (free to download) will enable you to edit these sounds and create your own piece of music. Your child will probably be able to help with this!

Recording their own songs and music is extremely rewarding for your child. Just make sure that you spend time listening back to the tracks to show that you value their efforts. A CD of your child singing makes a lovely home-made gift to send to relatives too!

## *TWO-MINUTE ACTIVITIES*

*(e.g. musical games to play in the car/at the shop)*

As well as singing, your child will be able to play other simple games when you are out and about. Some examples include:

**I Hear With My Little Ear** - Like the classic 'I Spy with My Little Eye', this game concentrates on sounds you can hear as you shop, drive or walk.

**Musical Memory Game** - This is a turn-taking game for any number of players. The first person starts by singing a note, making a vocal sound or making a sound with their body (e.g. a clap or stamp). The next person repeats the sound and adds one of their own. Play continues until somebody gets the sequence wrong. To start with, your child will only manage to remember two or three sounds but they will quickly learn strategies for remembering longer sequences.

## *MUSICAL ACTIVITIES FOR SEVERAL CHILDREN*

The old party favorites of **Musical Statues** and **Musical Bumps** are ideal for careful listening, dancing in time and social development. In Musical Statues, children dance to the music and freeze in position when the music stops. Anyone who moves is 'out'. For Musical Bumps, the last one to sit on the floor when the music stops is 'out'. The last remaining child is the winner.

**Squeak, Squeak, ROAR!** - This game works well as a circle game if you have enough people. One person starts by saying two sounds. They can choose from "squeak, squeak" in a high-pitched voice or "ROAR!" in a low, growl-like voice. The next person repeats the last sound made and adds their own, for example:

Person 1: "Squeak, squeak. Squeak, squeak."

Person 2: "Squeak, squeak. ROAR!"

Person 3: "ROAR! ROAR!"

Person 4: "ROAR! Squeak, squeak."

This will develop pitch as well as listening and memory skills. Other words or sound effects can be used, the sillier the better!

**The Swamp Game** - Play two notes on a tuned instrument (e.g. C/do and G/so), one of which you should introduce as the 'magic note'. Line the children up beside each other, ready to cross the 'swamp'. Play a note. If it is the 'magic note', an imaginary stepping stone will appear and the children can take one step across the swamp. If they step when the

note played was not the magic note, they fall into the 'swamp'. The winner is the first to the other side.

# CHAPTER 6

## CONCLUSION

We hope you enjoyed reading this book! We trust that you found some good reasons to make music a part of your child's life as well as some ideas to get you started. Whether you choose to use one of the more formal methods we discussed in Chapter Four, use your own activities at home or just sing more regularly with your child, you will be enriching your child's musical experience and portraying music as an important activity in its own right. Hopefully this book has encouraged you to try out a few activities and perhaps to learn a bit more about music-making yourself. If this is the case, there are plenty of books and websites which will support you as you become more confident and knowledgeable. Try going out with your friends to watch local music groups and look out for everyday opportunities to make music. While you may start off feeling apprehensive about these types of activity, moving out of your comfort zone is good for you and one look at your child's face as you sing a favorite song together or play a silly musical game will be enough to convince you that music-making is a wonderful thing.

We firmly believe that an introduction to the joys of music is one of the greatest gifts you can give your child - and one that will last them a lifetime. Not only will your little one gain self-esteem, confidence and social skills, but through musical expression, she will also foster her natural creativity, inventiveness and spark for learning and life. Music may well help your child become a better learner, but more importantly, music will give you an avenue through which you can bond with your child. Music will give both you and your child a sense of freedom, excitement and inspiration which you will always treasure.

# APPENDIX ONE

## THE BENEFITS OF PERFECT PITCH

### *WHAT IS PERFECT PITCH?*

Perfect pitch, otherwise referred to as absolute pitch, is the ability to:

- Recognize a given note and name it (e.g. hear a note and know that it's an A)
- Sing given notes from memory (e.g. if someone asked you to sing an F#, you could)
- Name the key of a piece of music and chords within it just by listening

While very few people in the western world possess perfect pitch (often cited as 1 in 10,000 people), the skill is much more prevalent in speakers of 'tonal languages' (mostly sub-Saharan and Asian languages, such as Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese and Thai), in those who have a family member with perfect pitch, in those who are autistic and in those who are blind from birth. It has also been found to be more likely in those who started musical training at a young age.

The degree to which people possess perfect pitch is variable. While some people can only recognize notes played on their specialist instrument, others can name the note of a non-musical sound, e.g. a car horn, or even give the numerical value (in Hertz) of a heard sound. Perfect pitch has often been described as 'color hearing'. This does not mean that people with perfect pitch associate different colors with tones (e.g. thinking of a C as red or a D as orange) but rather hearing the different 'sound colors' of each pitch. In the same way as we can see the different colors of the rainbow (due to their difference wave frequencies), we can also perceive the different frequencies and qualities of pitch: the 'tone colors'.

## *THE BENEFITS OF PERFECT PITCH*

The possession of perfect pitch brings some very clear benefits to the practicing musician, namely:

- Sight-singing becomes very accurate
- Playing by ear and improvisational skills are vastly improved
- Transcribing music becomes easy and composition becomes quicker
- Musical memory is improved, therefore increasing potential repertoire
- Tuning and intonation improves
- Confidence in performance increases
- Musical appreciation increases

### Sight-singing becomes very accurate

The ability to read a piece of music and know how each note should sound is incredibly important to a musician. With this skill, a performer can accurately sing a previously unknown piece of music note-perfectly. This means that the musician needs less time to learn the actual notes of the music, makes fewer mistakes and is able to spend more time focusing on expression and musical interpretation. Knowing how a written piece of music will sound when performed is also an important skill when studying scores, analyzing music theoretically or rehearsing/conducting ensembles.

### Playing by ear and improvisational skills are vastly improved

Playing by ear is particularly important in modern, popular, folk and jazz music, where to be able to play a tune that one has heard or knows in one's head is a very practical skill. Many a skilled pianist, although able to play Beethoven sonatas and Chopin mazurkas, would not

be able to play something as simple as 'Happy Birthday' without employing the trial-and-error method and therefore making mistakes. It may take them several attempts to get the whole tune, particularly with accompanying harmony. Yet for someone with perfect pitch, there is no difficulty in recreating any known or heard tune. They wouldn't even need to be given the starting note.

When improvising, perfect pitch is simply invaluable. For a jazz performer, to mentally hear what they want to play and then be able to effortlessly translate that to their instrument means that more complex and creative solos can be attempted with a greater sense of freedom and vitality.

## Transcribing music becomes easy and composition becomes quicker

As with playing by ear, transcription of music from what is heard onto paper becomes easy for the possessor of perfect pitch. Perhaps you hear a tune on the radio you would like to learn to play. With perfect pitch, you could simply write down the music to keep for later learning. Similarly, if you know a piece of music mentally that you would like someone else to learn, you can transcribe it onto paper to give to them.

In the same way, the mechanics of composition is greatly aided by perfect pitch. Any melodies or harmonies heard mentally can be written down directly, rather than using a time-consuming method of trial-and-error to find out which notes are the ones you want. Musical memory is improved, therefore increasing memorized repertoire

Musicians without perfect pitch can find it difficult to memorize a great many pieces, particularly if the pieces are complex and lengthy. Yet they know the pieces well and can hear mentally how they should sound. With perfect pitch, anything that is heard mentally can be reproduced and this makes memorizing music far quicker and easier, allowing for a much greater performance repertoire.



## Tuning and intonation improves

A person with perfect pitch is able to identify whether a note is in tune, slightly flat or sharp. This means that when singing or playing an instrument, they will be able to adjust each note to sound at the correct pitch and are unlikely to have any issues with poor intonation. Similarly, when working in a group, they are likely to pick up on any other tuning issues, which can then be remedied.

## Confidence in performance increases

Having absolute knowledge of which notes are being played and what those notes *are*, a performer with perfect pitch may feel more confident than one without. Because they are more sure in the notes and have a strengthened relationship between what they are hearing and what they are playing, they are often more secure in their performance and less swayed by nerves.

## Musical appreciation increases

Having perfect pitch - as opposed to not having it - has been likened to watching television in color rather than in black and white. People with perfect pitch claim that their enjoyment of music increases, when listening as well as performing. With perfect pitch, as well as feeling and appreciating the music, one truly knows and understands it.

## *SOME DISADVANTAGES*

While there can be no doubt that possessing perfect pitch provides the musician with a very valuable tool, it can also have its disadvantages. For some, hearing a performer play out of tune is irritating and grating on the ears, an issue both when listening and performing in a group. Having to play a well-known piece in a different key can prove difficult, as can

singing a piece of music with a different key note to that which is written. Playing a transposing instrument can cause significant problems, although some people claim to be able to 'switch off' their perfect pitch in these situations. Perhaps the most commonly-cited disadvantage to perfect pitch is that people with this skill may have little understanding of relative pitch. While this may be true in some cases, relative pitch is in fact a different skill to perfect pitch and should be learned in addition, not as an alternative. In order to function as a musician, having a good understanding of relative pitch is vital and is not made less so by having perfect pitch.

Yet despite the above disadvantages, the benefits of perfect pitch seem irrefutable. With the crucial relationship of mind, ear and voice strengthened, a sense of how each note should rightly sound and a real comprehension of the subtle differences and 'colors' between each tone, having perfect pitch not only heightens musical appreciation and adds a new dimension to performance, but enables easier mastery of the voice or other instrument. To intimately *know* the particular characteristics and qualities of each and every note that make up a piece of music is to have a greater perception and true understanding of the richness of music itself and once established, will last a lifetime.

# APPENDIX TWO

## SOLFÈGE AND THE

### “FIXED VS. MOVABLE DO” DEBATE

A central debate in the teaching and learning of music is whether the solfege system of Fixed Do or that of Movable Do is of greater benefit to the student musician. While Fixed Do is the primary method of teaching pitch in a great many countries, including much of Southern and Eastern Europe, Latin American, French-speaking Canada, parts of the Middle East, China, Russia and Japan, the Movable Do system is favored in Australia, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States, Hong Kong and English-speaking Canada. But why the difference in methodology?

In order to understand the reasons for this debate, it is important to know the difference between **absolute** and **relative** systems of pitch.

In English-speaking countries, the letters A, B, C, D, E, F and G (sometimes with a flat or sharp to raise or lower the pitch) are used to describe specific pitches. These letter names are used, regardless of the key of the music or the note's relationship to those around it; they are **absolute**. A concert pitch C therefore sounds the same on a piano as on a violin as on a trombone. A second system is employed to refer to the degree of the scale, using the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. So in a C major scale, 1 refers to C, while 7 refers to B. These numbers are **relative** and therefore refer to different notes depending upon the scale in question. In D major, the seventh note would be C sharp. Yet despite having these two functioning pitch systems, there is still a desire for many English speakers to use solfege syllables in the learning of pitch. Many people feel that there is something inherently 'musical' about the very sound of the words Do, Re and Mi, while others feel that it is the only system that is uniquely music-related (letter names relating primarily to language and numbers to mathematics) and should therefore be preserved.

The system of solfège (or solfeggio) itself was first used by the Italian monk Guido of Arezzo (ca. 995 - ca. 1050), and used the syllables Ut (since renamed Do), Re, Mi, Fa, Sol and La to name the first six degrees of the scale. The syllable Si, and then Ti, was introduced later to denote the seventh degree of the scale. These labels were originally used to refer to the specific degree of *any* given scale, e.g. Re would refer to the second note in any major scale.

The question at the crux of the debate is whether these solfège syllables should denote an *absolute* or a *relative* system of pitch. Should they relate to the C, D, E of English-speaking absolute pitch or the 1, 2, 3 of relative pitch?

In countries such as China and southern parts of Europe, solfège has developed into a system of absolute pitch, where Do always represents a C, regardless of key, and Re a D. In most English-speaking countries, however, solfège syllables are used to refer to relative pitches, where Do denotes the first degree of any scale and Re the second degree. This difference in use is the cause of the Fixed versus Movable Do debate.

## *FIXED DO*

In the Fixed Do system, a C is always called 'Do', a D always called 'Re', an E 'Mi' and so on. These names are used regardless of harmony, key or relative pitch. There are definite advantages of such a system. The usefulness of knowing internally what a 'Do' sounds like cannot be underestimated when sight-singing or sight-reading on a concert pitch instrument and mistakes can be recognized immediately and corrected promptly. Tuning issues become less of a problem and memorization becomes far easier and quicker. Similarly, compositional ability is aided and improvisation can sound more fluid and natural. Through its central focus of singing and listening, the Fixed Do system encourages children to develop excellent internalization skills and a strong sense of pitch memory. Because each syllable has

no relation to the key of a piece of music, the system can be used easily with atonal music or music that contains a lot of modulation. If taught from birth, it may help children to maintain their innate perfect pitch.

However, its pedagogic value in terms of harmonic comprehension and awareness of tonal function is limited. Children who learn using only Fixed Do will not necessarily develop a strong sense of relative pitch and may have little understanding of the function of a particular note within the key. They may have a limited feel for the tonic of a piece and could have difficulties in transposing when singing or in reading music in a different clef. Playing a transposing instrument may be particularly confusing, particularly if they have perfect pitch. It could be argued that students of the Fixed Do method are simply learning to sing or play each note individually, in a 'pitch target practice' type of game, rather than singing or playing with a full understanding of the essence of the music, its melodic sense and tonal harmony.

Two variations of the Fixed Do system exist, namely the use of either chromatic or non-chromatic syllables. In the non-chromatic method, the syllable Do is used for any type of C, whether it is a C natural, a C sharp, C flat, C double sharp or C double flat, but inflected up or down as appropriate. Although the simplest and most common type of Fixed Do system, it can cause much confusion, as the same syllables can be used to describe different intervals (e.g. the major third between C and E is sung as "Do Mi", as is the minor third between C and E flat and the diminished third between C sharp and E. At best, singing "Do Mi" signifies a third, but cannot specify which kind of third it is).

The chromatic fixed do system negates some of this confusion by allocating separate syllables for each pitch, although these can be onerous to learn, particularly for very young children. In an ascending C major scale, the syllables are Do, Di, Re, Ri, Mi, Fa, Fi, So, Si, La, Li, Ti and Do. A descending C major scale uses the syllables Do, Ti, Te, La, Le, So, Se, Fa, Mi, Me, Re, Ra and Do. Different endings are added for double sharps and flats and for notes such as E sharp or B sharp. The advantage of this system though, is the fact that, having no

reference to any given key, modulations to other keys or atonal music are no more difficult to learn than traditional, major/minor works.

To summarize, the main advantages and disadvantages of the Fixed Do system are as follows:

## Advantages of the Fixed Do System

- Can enable the acquisition (or maintaining) of perfect pitch if taught from birth;
- Develops a strong sense of pitch memory;
- Is helpful when sight-singing or sight-reading;
- Aids composition and improvisation;
- Focuses on listening and aural skills;
- Aids memorization of music;
- Easily accommodates modulations and atonal music.

## Disadvantages of the Fixed Do System

- Does not develop a sense of relative pitch or tonal functionality;
- A given syllable does not fully describe a note (Do could mean one of five notes (C natural, C flat, C double flat, C sharp or C double sharp));
- Can be confusing when the same syllables are used to refer to different intervals (e.g. do-mi could refer to a diminished, minor, major or augmented third);
- Although the two previous disadvantages largely disappear if the chromatic Fixed Do system is used, this system is often not employed and when it is, it can be time-consuming and difficult to learn;
- Makes clef-reading and transposition problematic.

## *MOVABLE DO*

In the Movable Do system, each solfège syllable corresponds not to a particular pitch, but to a scale degree: the first note in a major scale is sung as 'Do', the second as 'Re' etc. In this way, the interval between Do and Mi, for example, is always a major third, regardless of the key. Chromatic names are employed for accidentals. This method ensures consistency because the same syllables are always used for the same intervals, and it therefore fosters an innate sense of relationship between notes in a melody and between parts in a more complex piece of music. Movable Do develops a real feeling for the tonic and a full understanding of the harmonic role and function of each note within the key of the music. It enables a melody to be sung in any key using the same syllables and is therefore an ideal method for transposition.

When singing in a minor key, there are also two options for Movable Do, which is a debate in itself. The first is simply to continue using Do to refer to the tonic note ('Do-based minor'). This has the advantage of using the same name for the tonic note and allowing for easy comparison between major and minor keys. It also allows for more fluent, uninterrupted sight-singing when modulating to a minor key. However, it does rather undermine one of the central advantages to the Movable Do system, namely the consistency of interval names. The only way around this is to use chromatic syllables (see above for Fixed Do).

The second option is to use La-based minor, where La becomes the tonic in a minor key. By doing this, Mi-Fa and Ti-Do are always semitones, regardless of whether the key is major or minor. All the other intervals within the scale are similarly unchanged and chromatic syllable alterations are largely unnecessary. This method preserves the strong relationship between relative major and minor but means that the concept of Do as the central core of the music is lost.

Despite the many advantages of Movable Do and regardless of which system is used for minor keys, there are some clear disadvantages to the Movable Do system, most notably the fact that it does not develop a sense of absolute or perfect pitch. While Movable Do

students can name intervals and relationships between notes, they may not know what the actual note is. Modulations to new keys or atonal music are also harder to deal with in Movable Do and require some harmonic analysis in order to decide where key changes occur.

The main advantages and disadvantages of Movable Do are as follows:

## Advantages of the Movable-Do System

- An easy and natural way to teach harmonic relationships and relative pitch;
- Much easier for transposition and clef-reading;
- All intervals have the same name;
- All notes are fully described (so Do means C natural);
- Encourages a strong sense of the tonic;
- Enhances the ability to hear tonal relationships.

## Disadvantages of the Movable-Do System

- Can be difficult when music modulates or is atonal or chromatic;
- Does not develop a sense of absolute pitch, may make children lose perfect pitch;
- Needs a different approach for minor keys;
- Can be frustrating for students with perfect pitch.

While the debate is an interesting and very long-standing one, it is clear that in reality, a musician needs to be able to use both some kind of absolute and relative systems of pitch, whether these systems include solfège or not. In order for a student to play a given note and to learn the fingerings for that note, they need to be able to call it something, whether that is C, Do or something else. In order to understand a melodic line, the underlying harmonic structure of a piece of music and how their note operates relative to the key of the music is essential for the practicing musician, as is their ability to recognize intervals, to transpose and to sight-read.



As we have seen, there are distinct advantages and disadvantages to both the Fixed Do and Movable Do systems, but it is equally clear that to learn both simultaneously would be confusing and non-productive, particularly for a young child. Initially of course, if work is done in C major, there is no difference between Fixed Do and Movable Do and therefore no definite decision needs to be made. Once this stage is passed however, attention would need to be given to whether the child had perfect pitch and what future educational methods they would be likely to experience. While switching from one method to the other is possible, it is far better to stick with one system for quite some time to gain its full benefit before incorporating additional methods.

## *Every child deserves the gift of music.*

Ever wondered when and how to teach your child about music? Do you think it matters greatly if you're a specialist or not? Why is there a great need to teach young children about music? Are there any benefits to teaching music at an early age? Teaching Your Young Child Music provides the answers to all these questions and more.

This booklet provides you with an introduction to basic musical concepts (rhythm and pitch) and the methods of teaching music (Suzuki, Kodály, Orff, Yamaha). You'll also find practical activities you can do with your child which can help add joy to learning about music.

