

The Kodaly Concept in The United States: Early American Adaptations the Recent Evolutions

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In the article *The Kodaly Concept in the United States* Megan Sheridan (2019) suggests that this teaching method has gone through many transformations and developments over the past several decades. Through its introduction in the seventies until its use in current music classrooms, educators have seen many ideas, developments, and conceptual transformations. In the article, many of those ideas were discussed and explained. Kodaly was a pioneer in ideologies and educational tactics in Hungarian music education. Through study, implementations, and revision it has disseminated into American music classrooms across the country.

American music education has transformed many times in its implementation throughout the years (Sheridan, 2019). American singing schools which started in the eighteenth-century taught music in the form of symbol to sound. This method has been transformed into symbolic notation in modern classrooms. The idea of using sound before sight or symbols to help understand concepts and materials has proven successful over many years. These ideas and concepts are demonstrated with ideas and transformation of the Kodaly method in American schools.

Sheridan (2019) suggests that the Kodaly method was unique from the other approaches because it places singing that the core of music teaching and learning and stressed the important of listening to develop of musical awareness before introducing music theory. The sight before sound method helps develop a sense of the music and patterns that are being studied leading to music literacy. Sheridan points out that this is a simple but ultimate goal of the Kodaly Method.

The philosophy of Kodaly himself was that everyone deserves a sound music education, and that music is not just for the elite.

The Kodaly Method was based on principles and instructional techniques that were developed by Kodaly himself (Sheridan, 2019). Sheridan points out that these ideas and practices went through many transformations both pedagogically and, in its presentation, when the method was adapted and brought to America. One of these ideas is that music used in the classroom should be drawn from one's own culture rather than music from other cultures in the beginning. Understanding starts with familiar music and then transitions to unfamiliar music. With this understanding, the teacher and the students can identify and incorporate music that can support the teaching using the method, and its original philosophy. The Kodaly method provides sequencing of materials that are used based on the idea that music-learning is similar to language-learning. Research has supported that the method for presentation and development should be strong. The Kodaly method is not only an approach to teaching, but it also is used to help a teacher facilitate learning.

Lois Choksy was a successful and published music educator who has many contributions to the introduction of Kodaly to American classrooms (Sheridan, 2019). Choksy points out five specific components that help with the development and understanding of its presentation. These stem from the idea that "Music Literacy is the right of every human being," to "Only music of high quality should be used in the education of children (59)." Kodaly believed that music was for everyone and not just for the elite. This statement shows that music that is both familiar and unfamiliar are necessary in the education and understanding of our students.

Sheridan(2019) points out four prominent individuals in the development of the Kodaly method in American schools. These individuals were very fortunate to have the opportunity to study in Hungary with Kodaly himself. Their research suggests that studying directly with Kodaly was beneficial and necessary in for implementation of the Kodaly method in American Schools. It yielded information that helped transform the Hungarian method and sequencing to best fit American schools while maintaining the original philosophical elements of the Kodaly Method. First, was Mary Helen Richards who adapted the Kodaly method using experimental learning activities and a copy of a first-grade book that Kodaly gifted her. The activities were singing, chanting, moving, and listening, which all worked together simultaneously to help to create understanding of the music concepts taught. Second, was Denise Beacon who, while attending a conference presented by Richards, adopted the Kodaly method because the philosophy provided tools and improvements in the way that she instructed her students. She committed her work to bringing the Kodaly method to the United States. Her studies with Kodaly asserted that the Kodaly method was much more than a method, but an approach and a way of life. Beacon advocated to bring Hungarian teachers over to American schools to observe, teach, and inform American music teachers in the Kodaly method. The Third educator was Lois Choksy, who studied in Hungary with Kodaly. She contributed many works based on the Kodaly Method. Her texts have been, and still are used in many undergraduate, graduate, and Kodaly training programs. She also explained that the Kodaly method is based on a spiral curriculum which builds on the student's prior knowledge. Last, was Senora Lorna Zemke. Zemke took Kodaly's knowledge and developed lesson plans as examples in the teaching and presentation of the Kodaly Method. Zemke maintained and asserted that although the approach and knowledge is the same, the way the material is taught is vastly different, through adaptation and application.

These American leaders in education paved the way for the introduction, and implementation of the Kodaly Method in American schools both past and present.

According to the Kodaly Method, the process of teaching through preparation, presentation, practice and assessing are like current techniques of prepare, teach, enrich, assess, and re-teach (Sheridan, 2019). The hierarchy of presentation is one that demonstrates scaffolding for teaching to better enhance the understanding and development of music students. Sheridan also suggested that even though we see the research, development, and presentations of the Kodaly Method in American schools, the psychological aspect provided herein is based on those of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Skinner.

References

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