

Elementary Music Methods Overview

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Music Education has many methods of instruction. The ways of presenting the material in each of the methods varies and uses different vehicles of presentation. However, the ideas and concepts achieve the same final product, musical understanding, and musicianship. The teaching methods of Dalcroze, Kodaly, Orff, Teaching for Musical Understanding, Suzuki, and Music Learning Theory are all individual concepts that have several common threads in the way that material is presented in the music classroom.

Dalcroze- Eurhythmics

Dalcroze-eurhythmics primarily utilizes rhythm as a major focus in this teaching method (Choksy, 2001). Dalcroze in his studies understood that most of his students were advanced on their instruments, but they were unable to express or feel the music. He also grew readily aware that most of his students were unable to deal with rhythmic problems in the simplest form. Dalcroze, with this understanding took this premise and noted that rhythm is a musical source and a primary focus in music. Further in his studies he noticed how mechanical rhythm was for his students rather than a fluid representation of life itself.

The Dalcroze teaching method consisted of three components: eurhythmics, solfege, and improvisation (Choksy, 2001). Together these three components created a total music method where rhythm is in every aspect of human life. Dalcroze developed this method because he believed that when students could be taught to understand music and appreciation for music through physical movement. Through these methods they would develop a stronger sense of rhythm and harmony. Students respond to music more physically and retain information longer.

A large component of the Dalcroze method is improvisation by the teacher and student to support comprehension (Choksy, 2001). This ensures that composed music does not influence

the understanding of the concepts being taught until later. The use of improvisation should be intuitive to the students learning and demonstrate their understanding through their improvisation. Improvisation is the spontaneous reaction to music or musical elements allowing the students the freedom to react in their own personal way. Improvisation also is the internalization of concepts that range from simple to complex and demonstrate understanding before reading is introduced. Dalcroze-Eurhythmics encourages students to find a personal way to enjoy music through self-expression.

The Kodaly Method

Zoltan Kodaly developed this method of teaching in response to the low quality of music education in the Hungarian education system (Choksy, 2001). This response was to better improve the quality of training for the Hungarian teachers, improvement of the music curriculum, and have a class developed and focused on music specifically. His response led to the Kodaly Method.

The Kodaly method focuses on the use of heritage and culture of the region in which the music class is taught (Choksy, 2001). An important concept is that folk music was taught. The Kodaly method was not completely developed by Kodaly, but it was developed under his guidance and direction. He chose many concepts and techniques that were most engaging, expressive, creating, and collaborative. These concepts led to the development of his philosophy of this teaching method. The techniques in the Kodaly method are the solfege and hand signs, rhythm patterns, musical memory development, singing, and several more.

The Kodaly method stresses many ideas in the development of all students (children and adults) in music education (Choksy, 2001). These ideas discuss teaching music from a very young age, preferably starting at birth, music should be taught in a sequential and logical order,

music learning should be enjoyable, with singing being the most important aspect of all learning using music from the student's heritage and culture. The use of music from the heritage is the most important aspect, creating a connection to the lullabies, folk songs, and children's songs that are used in the student's home life.

The Kodaly method is sequential in its presentation from simple to complex, starts with beat, then upon mastery the progression moves to the next step in the sequence (Choksy, 2001). The principles that Kodaly focuses on moveable "do" solfege, hand signs for moveable "do" solfege, rhythm, creativity, and collaboration. Using these principles or ideas the Kodaly method provides a sound and fruitful music education for all students.

The Orff Method

The Orff method teaches musical skills such as imitation, exploration, literacy, and improvisation (Choksy, 2001). Each of these skills contributes to the education of each student. Imitation allows students to recreate a musical model such as a teacher, or student leader through singing, playing, or moving. Exploration allows the students to explore the different opportunities that each of the Orff instruments has to offer. Literacy is the process when the students start to make connection to concepts that they already know. This process is one that will happen quicker once they have experienced them through listening, imitation, and exploration. Improvisation allows students to not only explore the possibilities, but also create music using prior knowledge and patterns that they have already learned and experienced.

The Orff method is commonly associated with the Orff instruments, which are largely a part of the method, however, they are not the primary part of the method (Choksy, 2001). The Orff method uses a subject-logic-content approach, through an elemental style of teaching, which Orff held a belief that children can learn while they are playing, and that they will

continue to learn as they play. The teacher creates an environment where the student is encouraged to participate without judgement. Learning happens to each student in their own unique way through the use of encouraging phrases such as tell me, I forget, show me, I remember, involve me and I understand (Unknown, 2021). These get the learner involved in the way they demonstrate understanding.

Teaching for Musical Understanding

Teaching for Musical Understanding (TMU) is a teaching method that utilizes and prepares students for all situations (Wiggins, 2015). Through exercises in problem solving using the constructivist method and scaffolding. TMU creates lessons using problem-solving skills allow the students to act on their own understanding. As the students work through the big ideas or primary concepts, this will foster independent thinking allowing the students to take charge of their learning. As each instance is developed and the students work through them, this experience provides context that is holistic in nature. The teacher has a lot of interaction with the students in the beginning, when it is appropriate the teacher starts to back off and let the students discover the answers themselves. The teacher sets the goals in the beginning, and when the teacher backs down, the students will be able to work toward the goals and the end product as the activity is completed. The teacher comes back into the picture to assess the students.

For the student to fully experience understanding they must engage in the same processes as expert musicians, performing, listening, and creating (Wiggins, 2015). TMU does not aim to create expert musicians, the students need to engage in similar thinking processes. The music problems that students are expected to solve involve many analytical skills involving listening, composing, improvising, and arranging music. However, it is imperative that good musical

problems involve musical thought. This will require students to use musical thought, which is much more important than verbal thought.

As musical problems are planned, the teacher must think about several things (Wiggins, 2015). The Musical Context, the quality of music, structural simplicity, how to organize the experience, and how to assess the experience. For the teacher to create this instance successfully, they must plan around the student's prior knowledge. Each activity must lead to mastery before the teacher can move on. All problems can be created through several modalities listening, analyzing, creating, or composing, improvisation, media, and group work. The sequential planning must thoroughly be considered in accordance to where students are in their musical journey. The activities in this process include much of the same from the previous mentioned methods and modalities, assessing the end product for mastery.

The Suzuki Method

Suzuki is a method that focuses on the student as a musician who enjoys music, as opposed to creating professional musicians (Suzuki Association, 2022). Shinichi Suzuki is a music educator from Japan who is known worldwide for his practices and method. Suzuki is a method that not only teaches the student but also teaches the parents as the student learns, this helps the parents be at-home teachers. The students in lessons of the Suzuki method are taught privately and in groups. Using talent education, which basically states that talent can be learned, it is not something that you are born with. The method uses encouragement and praise in the lessons which create a positive learning environment and helps the students want to learn. The method largely uses aural training for a vast majority of the training. Reading is delayed until they are proficient on their instruments. Every Child can!!—is the philosophy in this method. This is so important in fostering the idea that every child can succeed.

Suzuki is like the thought processes of Music Learning theory (Suzuki Association, 2022). Just as we learn a language by listening to it, imitating it, practicing it before we start to read, write, and formulate sentences, we can learn music the very same way. Suzuki observed how easily children can learn their own language or their mother tongue. Through the idea of “character first, ability second,” Suzuki structured his teachings through the education of the whole child. Through whole child education, which is nurturing a love for music, and the developing of character the child can learn and develop their love of music.

Suzuki’s talent education alludes to the development of skills, knowledge, and character (Suzuki Association, 2022). These skills also reach beyond personal development and starts to build on group character development. The Suzuki method is not used to create professional musicians, but to develop of individual enjoyment of music. Many students who have been educated by the Suzuki method have become soloists, teachers, and orchestral musicians.

In the Suzuki method, we find that musical ability is not an inborn talent but an ability which can be developed, through proper training, leadership, and developing musical abilities (Suzuki Association, 2022). Concepts used in the Suzuki Method are listening, motivation, repetition, step-by-step mastery, memory, vocabulary, parental involvement, love, and developing a beautiful heart- through character education. The mother-tongue approach is taken very seriously, learning aurally first, then later introducing notation. (Sight before sound).

Music Learning Theory

Music Learning Theory (MLT) explains how students understand music (Gordon, 2012). Gordon states that students learn music based on their music aptitude. Music Aptitude

(MA) is an assessment that helps the teacher understand where their students are in their musical journey. This assessment helps the teacher create meaningful instruction starting at the student's level. MLT is primarily concerned with method and learning. Gordon's research demonstrates that most learning happens through audiation. Audiation is the process of assimilating and comprehending music that is heard or performed sometime in the past (3). Through audiation students will better comprehend the music that they are learning. Through inference, connections, and discrimination students will better grasp musical understanding.

MLT uses the development of five vocabularies that demonstrate the student's aptitude in music (Gordon, 2010). The five vocabularies focus on listening, singing, and chanting, improvisation, reading, and writing. As each vocabulary is mastered the next one may be introduced. Singing and chanting is a multi-step vocabulary with the use of tonal and rhythm patterns. These patterns use the voice, imitation, and audiation to successfully master these concepts. The idea of tonal patterns helps students understand the how music is structured. Gordon states in his research is that one cannot fully learn to appreciate music unless they can fully audiate music. Each vocabulary can be taught by themselves, or together in conjunction with one another. One of the primary ideas in MLT is that students do not participate immediately, but they will participate on their own. Students should be encouraged and not discouraged to participate in singing, chanting, or rhythm patterns.

Music Education has many methods that can be used to educate all students. Each method has its strong points and speaks to the strengths of every teacher. The Dalcroze, Kodaly, Orff, Teaching for Musical Understanding, Suzuki, and MLT have several common threads, and a common goal. This common goal is musical understanding, and musicianship. This in the education of all students creates the whole musician.

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