

Holy Names Music Curriculum - Introduction

This curriculum is modeled on a Hungarian music curriculum adopted in 1983 and used in numerous Hungarian singing schools during the last two decades. A translation of the Hungarian curriculum was made by Judit Szalai, daughter of Judit Hartyányi, who accompanied her mother during two years when Judit Hartyányi taught at Holy Names University. It is informed by translations she also made of EnekZene, the series of textbooks and workbooks by Helga Szabó (published in 1981) on which the Hungarian curriculum is based.

Why a curriculum?

The greatest challenge in adopting Kodály music education in the United States is the lack of textbooks. Teachers do their best to create worksheets, and project or write music on the board, but this doesn't provide children with a body of notated music that builds from one level to another, and through which they can find and hear relationships. Textbooks by Choksy, Hein and Dalton for grades 1 and 2 were developed for use with the San Jose Pilot Project in 1975. However, they went out of print and have not been reissued.

Until this challenge is met, it may be useful to have a curriculum that provides teachers a daily guideline for introducing musical concepts and skills—yet allows flexibility in choosing materials to complement the core musical development. This allows the curriculum to serve in a variety of settings—classrooms, choirs and churches—as teachers incorporate additional materials from various genres, regions and ethnic groups.

For whom is the curriculum intended?

This curriculum is designed for teachers who have studied in a Kodály Teacher Education program. Training in these programs provides teachers with both materials and processes for developing children's aesthetic sensibilities, and their singing and aural development. The training also presents a model for developing music literacy that moves from sound to symbol, so that children can learn to read and write music independently.

How did the curriculum evolve?

The curriculum was inspired by observations of Hungarian elementary classrooms by the author, in 1988 and 1998. These observations reinforced the importance of motivic structure and relationships within and between songs, and also of the interdependence of melody and rhythm.

The adaptation of the Hungarian curriculum has involved reordering the sequence of elements to correspond to the musical elements in American folk songs and singing games.

Based on many years of teaching both children and music teachers in the U.S., the curriculum has grown from my experience with both groups. The children have required active engagement with the music—the need to bring each song to life and to use their ideas for engaging with the songs in each lesson. Graduate students enter at Holy Names have probed the pedagogical process, asking exactly what concepts and skills are introduced when, and why.

Where does the curriculum begin? What experiences do children need in order implement this curriculum?

This curriculum begins with Grade 1 and assumes that the children have had prior music experiences in kindergarten and, ideally, pre-school. If children do not have this background, it is recommended that teachers consult Katalin Forrai's *Music in Pre-school* as a guide to nurture students' musical development—with special attention to expressive singing and awareness of beat and rhythm.

Briefly, **expressive, in-tune singing** is a goal underlying each pre-school and kindergarten music lesson. (In addition, each pre-school lesson will have a specific goal such as beat keeping, solo singing, tempo, inner hearing, hi-low, loud-soft, etc.) In-tune singing can be developed in a variety of ways through choosing songs with a small, often pentatonic, range, that include movement, and which are performed without instruments. A comfortable starting pitch is critical, and teachers should listen and assess singing as soon as students can sing the song independently.

Teachers can explore vocal range in playful ways, to encourage students who have not yet found their singing voice. The use of puppets, and animal sounds, often helps younger children feel comfortable in experimenting with their voices. The alternation of solo and group singing is useful in allowing children hear themselves and also promotes in-tune singing.

With regard to **rhythmic development**, beat is introduced with 3 year olds and explored with many different chants and songs, and with various instruments. When ready, solo beat work is encouraged to nurture independence, with one child playing the beat on a drum while the others chant or assist by tapping the beat.

Rhythm is introduced with 4 year olds, after children can keep beat independently of the teacher. Students learn to perform rhythm by themselves of well-known chants and songs, and can also make up word motives and clap the rhythms. Because the rhythms are not yet "conscious" they can explore songs containing any rhythms, so this provides a high level of challenge. The quality of group and individual performance of rhythm is the goal, and the performance of rhythm (clapping, or on an instrument) should always serve as an accompaniment to the singing. It is important that as a general rule, the child sings and performs beat or rhythm, rather than one or the other. This is the beginning of part-work, and increases the child's ability to coordinate more than one sense (kinesthetic and oral/aural, e.g.)

At 5, in the kindergarten year, the children contrast beat and rhythm, performing one or the other. They may do this by switching back and forth, singing a song first with beat, then with rhythm, and later, switching on cue during the song. They then learn to perform one while the other is sounding, which again builds independence and greater accuracy. Each time a new skill is taught, the teacher introduces the new concept via listening/performance. For example, students might perform rhythm while listening to see if teacher is performing rhythm or something else (beat). After sufficient class work, duets, with two students singing while one performs beat and the other performs rhythm, are excellent to build independence with this new skill. Finally the teacher can introduce the performance of simultaneous beat and rhythm—stepping beat and clapping rhythm. Students can practice this, both while singing and while inner hearing.

For children who only start in kindergarten, one might condense this into 3 months of beat development, 3 months of rhythm development and 3 months of integrating beat with rhythm. And if you plan to implement this curriculum in Grade 1 and the children have not had any prior beat/rhythm development, it is recommended that at a minimum, you spend at least 8 lessons each with beat and rhythm before beginning to integrate beat and rhythm. It is essential that children really understand the concepts of beat and of rhythm before they start listening for specific rhythms or how many sounds they hear on one beat. This is not just because it will help them be more accurate when they begin the process of translating sound into symbol. It is also because they will perform more musically if their sense of beat and rhythm are secure.

How is the curriculum designed?

The curriculum follows the design of the Hungarian curriculum mentioned above, and indicates the core musical skill development for each lesson. Five categories of information are provided: 1) **materials** for presenting concepts, 2) **music elements or concepts** for that lesson, 3) **skill development** related to those concepts, 4) **singing games** which are not already included in the lesson but which relate to the concept or element being presented and 5) **additional reading exercises**.

This model has several advantages. Because it outlines just the music literacy portion of the curriculum, it allows the teacher freedom to include additional songs and singing games from various genres and cultures that are of most interest to the children in the classroom. The songs and skill development designated for each lesson can be presented in whatever order best fits with the other materials chosen. It invites the teacher to think creatively and to search for how other materials fit with those that are recommended. It also has the advantage of being of use in different settings (both classroom and choir), as mentioned earlier. A brief description of each of the five categories may be helpful:

Materials

Songs are recommended that provide the material for the skill development related to each element or concept. These materials must be well-known songs which the children can sing independently of the teacher (unless they are serving as new reading material, more common in older grades than in earlier ones). Other songs can be substituted, as long as they have the requisite musical material.

Elements

This category indicates the elements and concepts being addressed in the lesson. Teachers may choose to review other elements, as well; those designated are the newest learning.

Skill development

This category briefly notes the skill development associated with each element or concept.

Singing games

Many of the songs designated for concept and skill development (the first column in the curriculum) are themselves singing games. However singing games may contain the concept being studied but have more advanced elements that the children do not yet understand consciously. These are listed under the singing games column. E.g., Oliver Twist is a wonderful game for first graders, and with its s-m-l tone set and m-l context, is helpful to the children to prepare or reinforce the s-m-l turn. However, the song is in 6/8

meter, which has not yet been introduced. Playing this singing game before working with other songs that have this melodic turn will help children to experience it unconsciously.

Additional materials

Additional reading exercises, two-part exercises and arrangements are indicated which relate to the skill development level of the lesson. These can be used if there is additional class time, or students are able to move quickly (older beginners).

70 lessons are designed for each level, for implementation in a twice a week music program over the course of a school year. If music is offered just once a week, students will not be able to progress through the entire curriculum at the same rate. For those who have the advantage of 3 or more music classes per week, more review is possible, as is the use of the additional materials.

Lesson Planning

Since singing is the basis of a Kodály-inspired approach to music learning, attention to the *quality of singing* (energy, intonation, spirit) is an underlying objective in each lesson. Choose songs or singing games that will encourage beautiful singing and which the children know well for the beginning of each lesson. Provide feedback to them (mostly non-verbal) to help shape their singing that will “set the tone” for the entire lesson. It is important to pitch songs in a comfortable singing range, where children can use their head voices. It is also important for the teacher provide a clear, in-tune singing model, and to listen more than he/she sings.

Choice of quality materials is crucial in all aspects of lesson planning. The songs need to be appropriate for the age of the children and for the concepts being presented. You will need to choose songs to complement those designated for concept and skill development in the curriculum. Some may be chosen to help prepare or reinforce that lesson’s musical development, others may be chosen to nurture the imaginative, emotional, social and physical lives of the children. You will also need to introduce the songs that will be used pedagogically in future lessons, so that they are well known before they the children are led to discover their musical elements.

Overall shape and flow of lesson: The songs you choose to complement the ones provided in the curriculum will help determine the order of songs and flow of the lesson. The songs and objectives designated for each lesson in the curriculum can be done in whatever order you feel will create the best learning. Once you decide which songs/materials will best complement, enrich and enhance learning, you can decide on an order.

- What tone sets are involved? Which songs will best prepare the aural, reading, writing objectives and should therefore immediately precede these objectives, so that children are warmed- up in the scale and key?
- When would it be best to include movement? Have the children been sitting a long time before music class, so that movement should happen early in lesson? Have they just come from recess or PE and need to calm down and focus, rather than move immediately? Which are the most challenging objectives, after which the children will need to relax mentally.

- When might a rhythm objective, which brings energy and quick attention, work well? Perhaps nearer the beginning of the lesson than the end, after good singing is established, in order to bring the children's tempi together.
- With younger students, listening often works well at the end of the lesson, after they have mastered the new skills presented in the lesson.

Balance of individual and group performance in each lesson: As the students become comfortable with individual performance, there should be a clear balance between individual and group or class performance. The give and take between the individual and the group keeps lessons exciting and challenging and allows students to take responsibility for what they know. It also allows you to assess where they are and what skills and concepts need to be reinforced and practiced.

Variety of skill development: It is important to include a variety of skill development in each lesson. After simple melodic and rhythmic elements are introduced, lessons may include memorization, reading, writing, inner hearing, derivation, listening, part work, improvisation, etc.. The skill development designated in the curriculum is minimal; you are encouraged to plan additional skill development related to the objectives. E.g., before reading it is useful to inner hear the example. It is important to remember to reinforce aural with visual learning in each lesson.

Preparation and reinforcement of learning objectives: In order for children to be successful, each objective must be prepared and reinforced. As stated earlier, this curriculum is intended for teachers who have studied in Kodaly music education programs and who understand the process of review, point and reinforcement for each objective being presented in the lesson. Preparation and reinforcement of objectives are essential elements in implementing this curriculum, and cannot be presented accurately or adequately in writing.