



## Music Education

### Overview

Music education classes at The Anglican School Googong use a musicianship-based approach to education, predominantly incorporating the methodology of Hungarian composer Zoltan Kodály. Kodály said that true musical literacy involves musical memory and the ability to '**internally hear what you see and write what you hear**'. This means that the musician needs to be able to do more than merely interpret the notation on their instrument. They must also be able to look at a piece of musical notation and hear it in their head without firstly needing to play it on an instrument and also be able to listen to a piece of music and notate it. When a student can do all of this, they are truly musically literate.

This idea of true musical literacy may be a new concept. Those who have had the privilege of learning an instrument may have been taught by interpreting the dots on the staff and associating each dot with a fingering to play. Slowly and with practise, proficiency on the instrument developed. However, many who learnt to interpret musical notation in this way struggle with being able to hear the notes on the page without having their instrument to play it for them and find it difficult to aurally dictate music. Identifying symbols does not necessarily translate to having a true understanding of the language of music.

Therefore, our goal is to encourage and educate our students to be truly musically literate, enhancing their musicianship skills, including their ability to create new music and perform with musical sensitivity.

The regular and sequential nature of our classroom music education programme allows our students to develop:

- The ability to sing and play tunefully and musically.
- True musical literacy
- Creativity and the ability to compose their own music
- Fine and gross motor skills through dancing, moving and playing instruments.
- Listening and concentration
- Perseverance
- Memory
- Cooperation skills in a group situation
- Further enhancement of literacy skills through text improvisation, text memorisation and the study of song tales from past centuries
- Further enhancement of numeracy skills through the study of rhythmic subdivision, pattern making and beat keeping.
- An understanding of History and how the music represents the social and political happenings of the time

## *What does this look like in the classroom?*

The emphasis in the classroom is on **making music first**. Just as we learn our spoken language by listening first, imitating, speaking and finally reading and writing, music is taught by listening first, imitating, singing songs and games, moving, playing classroom instruments and finally in reading and writing. In other words, the sound always comes before the symbol.

We begin by laying the foundation of musicality in the Kindergarten year, where we develop accurate singing and rhythmic skills as well as creating and expressing musical sensitivity. This is done through singing simple songs, chanting rhymes, moving to the beat, creating body movements to known songs, keeping the beat on their bodies and percussion instruments, creating new text to old songs, finger-plays, circle, line and partner games, moving to and listening to Art Music and listening to song tales. These types of activities happen in every subsequent year level with repertoire and games of increasing complexity.

The Kodaly methodology emphasises the importance of singing as the basis of instruction, moving from very simple to more complex songs, listening to masterworks and then introducing instruments for children to study. The music classroom is a physically active one, which combines singing and movement so that the music really becomes an intrinsic part of them. As prominent Australian musician Richard Gill says: *"From singing they can also learn to analyse sound, learn to discriminate ways in which pitch and rhythm are used, learn how pattern and repetition work in music and subsequently build a vocabulary of sounds and ideas which they can use in their own compositions."*<sup>1</sup>.

As a result of this early emphasis on tuneful singing and good vocal production our co-curricular choral programme actually begins in the classroom and extends out to the choirs.

Once the children can sing and play the repertoire confidently we can then introduce the musical notation. By this time, naming the element and linking it to the symbol poses no great problem as the children have sung it and 'felt' it. Children can use this knowledge to create their own music, some of which may be notated and some performed without the need for notation.

We use rhythm names (ta and ti-ti etc.) and the 'movable do' (do re mi) system to teach notation. The rhythm names are predominantly used so that children can play the rhythms accurately and with a strong sense of beat. They then also learn the more formal English and the American rhythm names. Moveable 'do' is used to hear the pitch and intervallic relationship between the notes of the scale and then placed on the musical staff. Letter names are then used alongside the sol-fa.

By Grade 3 the children have the motor skills and enough musical knowledge to begin playing the recorder. We begin by playing simple songs, which we have previously sung and continue using the recorder in subsequent years with progressively more difficult repertoire.

By Grade 4 the children learn an orchestral instrument. These lessons are part of the academic music programme. By the end of Grade 4, the children may choose to continue learning that instrument as a co-curricular activity. These children will be able to play in any school ensemble suited to their abilities. You may be interested in the following link which describes the neurological benefits of playing a musical instrument in a short animated Ted talk.

### [Ted Ed – How playing an instrument benefits your brain](#)

In Grade 5 and up the rhythm and tonal content expands to include major, minor and modal tonalities, complex rhythms and metres, analysis of major works, compositions and performances.

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<sup>1</sup> This article appeared in the January 2013 issue of [Limelight Magazine](#).