



summer.
music
institute

Building a Children's Choral Program

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AGENDA

- 1. Why a Children's Choir**
- 2. Methodology**
- 3. Structure**
- 4. Repertoire**
- 5. Leadership**
- 6. Conclusion**

WHY A CHILDREN'S CHOIR

School choirs are absolutely vital to the music education of any child. Not simply band, ukelele, recorders, etc.

Choir.

However, a children's choral program offers something different. Not better. Just different.

As directors, it is important that we articulate what makes it different.

Learning the structure of the liturgy.
Preparation of music as part of the ritual.
English, Spanish, Latin, Vietnamese,
Tagalog.

WHY A CHILDREN'S CHOIR

An important component of the children's choral program is learning what it means to be a team and belonging to each other.

The metaphor of belonging to a greater Christian family is actualized in the choir. No one exists to themselves. Everyone's actions affect each other.

They sing flat, the choir suffers. They sing too loud, they cannot hear others. They show up late or are absent, the choir weakens.

The lesson of community becomes sacramental to the love and body of Christ. Add the Eucharist to that and the image of Christ is shown in every singer, in every voice.

WHY A CHILDREN'S CHOIR

The role of the choir:

To assist the congregation:

- hymns
- dialogues
- chants
- Taize

To sing for interior participation:

- Special anthems
- Motets
- Songs

Interior and exterior participation are vital. The music accompanies the liturgical action. Interior participation will shape our hearts and exterior participation will shape our neighbors.

WHY A CHILDREN'S CHOIR

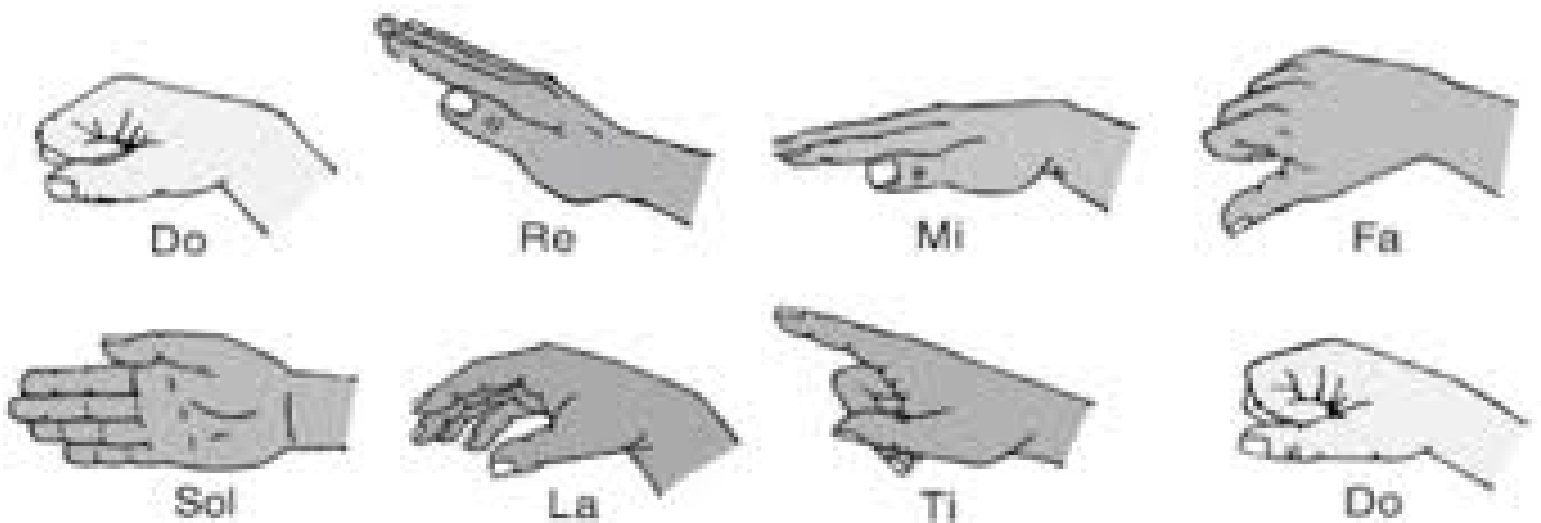
The Children's Choral Program is the most important music program of the church. The documents of the church talk at great length of the importance of sacred music of the church but they are insufficient in that they still require training in solfege, choral direction, vocal pedagogy, repertoire, methodologies, theology, classroom management, software, piano, child development, etc.

We can certainly use the church documents as reference but for parents, we must be able to show through the fruits of our labor the difference having a children's choir makes.

METHODOLOGIES

KODALY

- Emphasis on appropriate music for kids based on musical intervals
- Reading music through curwen handsigns
- Use of Chromatic solfege, fixed do solfege, moveable Do solfege, etc.
- Emphasis on teaching through the music



METHODOLOGIES

KODALY

- Importance on distinguishing between tempo and rhythm
- Steps to learning: always start with the song; echo sing. NO NOTATION

Keep a steady beat as you sing the chorus
of the song:



Oh my



dar-



ling,



oh my



dar-



ling,



Oh my



dar-



ling



Clem-en-



tine!



METHODOLOGIES

ORFF Schulwerk

Orff believed that every child has the ability to make music, regardless of prior skill or experience. The focus is on inclusion and participation, not performance perfection.

Emphasis is on experiential learning—students learn music by making it, not just studying theory. Activities include singing, playing, speaking, dancing, and improvising.

Philosophy is that every rehearsal should be based on having fun.

METHODOLOGIES

ORFF Schulwerk - Teach the song first

Ding Dong **DIGGIDIGGIDONG** FOLK SONG



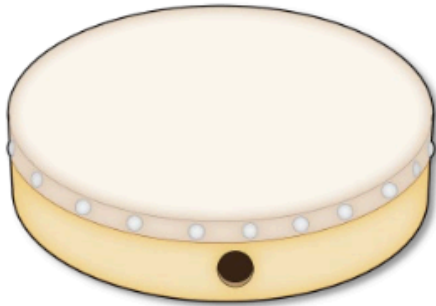
Ding dong, dig-gi-dig-gi-dong, dig-gi-dig-gi-dong, the cat, she's gone!



Ding dong, dig-gi-dig-gi-dong, dig-gi-dig-gi-ding dang dong.

METHODOLOGIES

Introduce the instruments in an ostinato

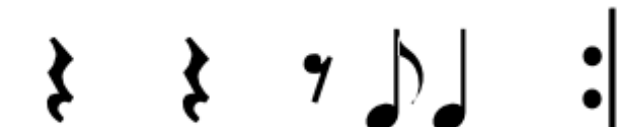


Hand
Drum



METHODOLOGIES

Work on rhythms together and add song!



METHODOLOGIES

WARD Method - The Ward Method is a pedagogical approach to music education developed by Justine Ward (1879–1975), designed specifically to teach Gregorian chant and music literacy within the context of Catholic education. It emphasizes vocal training, ear development, and sacred music appreciation, rooted in both Gregorian chant tradition and solfège-based pedagogy.

FIRST DAY

1. The teacher enters the room singing very gaily: "Good morning, dear children," on a single tone (about A flat). The children will try to answer on the same tone.

2. Teacher: "Listen to this lovely tone and then you may try to sing it also." (Sings "Noo—" very softly on A flat. See Vocal Exercise 1).* The children imitate. The result will be a babel of sound composed of almost as many different tones as there are children. The teacher should appear very much pleased with the children's effort and give the tone once more, saying: "Listen." Her own attitude should be one of listening. She should not gaze too fixedly at the little ones while they are singing as it frightens them, but should always listen with great interest to their tone, as this attitude encourages them to make efforts.

METHODOLOGIES

WARD Method

The children should stand during the Vocal Exercise (which should be taken on two or three tones only); then the teacher will turn rapidly to something else.

Vocal Exercise 1



Repeat section g, then f, e, d, c, b, and a.

METHODOLOGIES

WARD Method

Rhythm

3. Teacher: "Sit down"—(as though announcing a great treat).

(a) The children sit very erect, at attention, with both hands raised toward the shoulders, palms out.

(b) Teacher beats time with great vigor and gayety, saying "down-up, down-up."

(c) Children beat time with teacher, striking their desks on "down" and raising their hands to original position at "up."

The movement should be brisk, definite, and from the elbow only so as to insure covering an even distance, but there should be nothing rigid or constrained in the gesture. (The beating of time by the children is always prefaced by the teacher saying with great energy: "down-up, ready—start," to set the pace, while the children sit erect with raised hands.)

METHODOLOGIES

WARD Method

4. After three or four minutes, teacher will say: "Now, children, we will hear the beautiful 'noos' again."

Children stand. Teacher sings "noo" on A flat.

Children imitate.

Teacher articulates the consonant "N—" but without singing.

Children imitate.

Teacher pronounces "Oo—," as in the word noon, exaggerating the forward motion of the lips. Children imitate.

Teacher pronounces "N-n-oo," taking plenty of time for the forrration of the sound " n." Children imitate.

Teacher intones "N-n-oo—" on A flat.

Children imitate.

Teacher explains very briefly that the voice is like smoke soaring up a chimney, or uses any other illustration that will help to create a mental image of the light quality and high placing of the tone.

She will then sing "Noo" again insisting that the children sing very softly. Children imitate.

Aspect	Ward	Orff	Kodaly
Founders	Justine Ward	Carl Orff and Günild Keetman	Zoltán Kodály
Historical Origin	Early 20 th century (Catholic schools, US)	1920s–1930s Germany	Mid-20 th century Hungary
Primary Goal	Liturgical participation through Gregorian chant	Creative expression through integrated arts	Musical literacy and cultural identity through song
Musical Focus	Gregorian chant, sacred music	Improvisation, rhythm, movement, folk	Folk music, art music, solfège-based singing
Pedagogical Approach	Sequential, solfège-based, with Latin and chant	Exploratory, experiential, multi-sensory	Sequential, auditory to visual, song-based
Use of Instruments	Minimal (focus on a cappella singing)	Extensive (Orff instruments: xylophones, glockenspiels, drums)	Minimal (voice-centered)
Use of Voice	Central; trained for purity and control	Important but combined with speech/movement	Essential; used to internalize music concepts
Notation Style	Gregorian chant notation and staff notation	Graphic and traditional notation introduced	Traditional Western notation taught after aural mastery
Cultural Emphasis	Catholic liturgical tradition	European folk and global music traditions	Hungarian and broader European folk music
Role of improvisation	Very limited	High (student improvisation encouraged)	Moderate (used for teaching but not central)


REPERTOIRE

STAY ORGANIZED!


- Create a digital library
- Buy the appropriate amount of music copies—keep the digital as a way to replace. Ideally, purchase replacements at the end of the season
- Organize your music library by choir, then by parts (SA, SSA, SAB, etc), then organize by intervals
- Create a center from where parents can get music, receive messages, and let the technology work for you
- Remind is great but other apps work
- When in doubt, communicate. Emails, texts, phone calls, all of the above

REPERTOIRE


Students will demonstrate proficiency of the following elements through **singing, reading, writing, moving, listening, audiation, memorizing, and creating**:

- Comparatives
 - Same / Different
 - Loud / Soft
 - Fast / Slow
 - Short / Long
 - High / Low
- Steady Beat
- Rhythm
- Beat / Rhythm
- 
- **m s**
- **l**
- Staff
- $\frac{2}{4}$
- Conduct in 2
- Steps and Skips

Students will demonstrate proficiency of the following elements through **singing, reading, writing, moving, listening, audiation, memorizing, and creating**:

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- Conduct in 2
- Steps and Skips


Students will demonstrate proficiency of the following elements through **singing, reading, writing, moving, listening, audiation, memorizing, and creating**:

- All previous elements
- 
- **-**
- **d**
 - **s m d**
 - **s - d**
 - **do** clef
- Hand staff
- $\frac{4}{4}$
- Bar lines
- Measures
- Conduct in 4
- Reading and writing in F and G **do**

Students will demonstrate proficiency of the following elements through **singing, reading, writing, moving, listening, audiation, memorizing, and creating**:

- All previous elements
- **o**
- **-**
- **r**
- **m-r-d**
- Reading and writing in **F, G, and C do**
- Ledger line
- **do** pentatone
- Repeat sign
- 1st and 2nd endings

Students will demonstrate proficiency of the following elements through **singing, reading, writing, moving, listening, audiation, memorizing, and creating**:

- All previous elements
- 
- **γ**
- **l**, (low la)
 - **d - l**,
 - **do** centered
 - **la**, centered
- **s**, (low so)
 - **s, - l**,
 - **s, - d**
 - **do** centered
 - **la**, centered

Students will demonstrate proficiency of the following elements through **singing, reading, writing, moving, listening, audiation, memorizing, and creating**:

- All previous elements
- **la** pentatonic scale
- **d'** (high do)
 - **l - d'**
 - **s - d'**
- Extended **do** pentatonic scale
- Extended **la** pentatonic scale
- Treble clef
- Absolute pitches in C, F, and G **do**.

LEADERSHIP

- Appoint parent volunteers
- Figure out how you want to use them
- Make every rehearsal fun!
- Progress + Fun = Success
- Set up rehearsal schedules minute by minute
- Sprinkle in methodologies in the rehearsal
- Set up a board for parent boosters
 - Coach parents for a year until they can continue without you
- Learn piano, find a pianist, make practice tracks, etc
- Invest in video and photography
- Have games ready for every rehearsal ready to go:

Fun ideas for the Classroom

By Darren Wicks

Magic Sound

Children sit in a circle. One holds a large ball or other object to pass (make it interesting to see and hold). The teacher improvises on recorder (or voice, or on her pitched instrument). When the "magic sound" is heard (so-mi-so-mi), the ball is passed to the next student.

If the children are not used to this aural discrimination, start vocally using solfege syllables. Eventually transfer to neutral syllables (loo, la, etc.) and then to instruments. Start by playing the pattern in predictable spots, like the ends of phrases. Also, at first play only other pitches when the magic sound is not present. Gradually make the placement less predictable, and challenge the listeners to pass the ball only when they hear the complete pattern. Kids should eventually become leaders. This can be used for any pitch or rhythm patterns, and is great for aural discrimination and building listening skills. It provides a great opportunity for you to model improvisation, and to build understanding of phrase

Home base

This is a variation on the old game of 'musical chairs'. You can use it to teach rhythm or pitch recognition, or to reinforce a variety of music theory concepts. You will need a number of A4 sheets (probably 4 or 5). On each sheet write down a rhythmic pattern (a 4-beat pattern for easy challenge or an 8-beat pattern for a harder challenge). Lay the sheets around the room. It works well with one sheet in each corner of the room and one in the middle. If classroom space is a restriction, consider playing this game outside.

Next, you will need something to provide music, such as a CD player, a percussion instrument or you can sing a well-known folk song. While music is being played, students walk around the room on the beat. When the music stops, students must run to the closest card and stand in that area. The teacher then performs one of the rhythm patterns from the card. Any students who are standing in the proximity of the card are eliminated and must sit down. Play continues until a winner is found.

There are so many possible variations on this game. To make it really challenging, simply make the rhythms very similar except for one or two beats. Instead of rhythm patterns you could use melodic fragments and write them on the cards using stick notation and solfa or write them in stave notation. Alternatively, you could use theoretical symbols—such as different types of notes (crotchet, quaver, minim). Another suggestion would be to use particular chord sequences/progressions or cadences. The point is that this simple game can be easily adapted to suit any age group and any ability. Another way to make this game interesting is to change the process of elimination. Instead of it being hit and miss, you could perform the musical pattern after the music stops and then students need to choose the right card and run to home base.

Freeze

Before beginning this game the teacher must explain the signal to freeze. This signal may be any melodic pattern (such as so-la-so-mi) or any rhythmic pattern (such as ta ti-ti ti-ti ta) that the class may be working on at the time. It's often best to write the pattern on the board or you could introduce a challenge by making students memorise the pattern. Students walk freely around the room while teacher sings or improvises on the recorder. Teacher should disguise the signal to freeze within the performance. On hearing the signal, students stand completely still. Teacher continues to play/sing and students must remain "frozen" until they hear the signal again.

Who has the Penny?

You will need a collection of inexpensive objects which are small enough to be hidden in the palm of the hand. Make a list of these and place the objects in a box. Pass the box around the room and the students are told to quickly choose one object from the box.

The teacher chooses objects randomly from the list and sings, "Who has the yellow marble?" improvising on *so mi-la so mi*. The student who has the object in possession replies by singing, "I have the yellow marble!" also improvising on the *so mi-la so mi* toneset. The student then places the object back into the box. The process is repeated until all objects are located.

Forbidden Rhythm

This game requires little time for setting up and no props. It can be used to fill extra minutes at the end of the class period. This game is a spiced up version of the "echo clapping" activities that are common in the classroom. The teacher announces that there is to be a forbidden rhythm and claps a 4 beat (8 beat) rhythm pattern. To make it easy, the rhythm pattern could be written on the board. To make it more challenging, students could be asked to memorise the rhythm pattern.

The teacher now performs various rhythm patterns, which the class are asked to "echo" or clap back. If the teacher performs the 'forbidden pattern' students should stay still and not echo the pattern. Any student who claps the forbidden rhythm is eliminated. Keep a watch for those who are not clapping any of the rhythms.

Steal the Bacon

To prepare for this game, you will need a set of flashcards. Each card should contain various 4-beat or 8-beat rhythmic or melodic patterns. The class is divided into two teams and each team stands in a single line down the back of the room. The flashcards are spread out on the floor or stuck to the board at the front of the room.

The teacher performs one of the rhythms. The first student in each line must race to the front of the room and be the first to grab the appropriate card. They then take the card to the teacher for verification. If correct that student scores one point for his/her team. Both students return to the end of the line and the next student in line plays for the team.

Another possibility is to draw a percussion instrument on each card or have the pictures drawn by the students. Have a percussion instrument played where it cannot be seen by the students. The first student to grab the appropriate card earns a point for the team.

Rhythm Chart

For 5-7 year olds, make up a simple chart by creating a large grid that is 4 squares across and 4 down. The chart represents 4 rows of 4 beats. Onto this chart you can attach various pictures representing body percussion. For example if the children are to clap 4 beats and stamp 4 beats, there will be 4 pictures of hands on the first row and 4 of feet on the second row. Pictures can be attached using Velcro or Blue-Tac or some other means. They can be easily re-arranged by the teacher or the children to form a great variety of patterns. Since the activity involves reading from left to right and from top to bottom, there are benefits in terms of reading readiness. For a variation, you could use pictures of percussion instruments.