

A Comparative Study on the Most Popular Music Teaching Approaches since 20th Century: the Orff, Kodály, and Suzuki

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Abstract. Music teaching approaches are systematic teaching methods music educator use in music classrooms. The famous ones are the Orff approach, the Kodály approach, the Suzuki approach, and the Dalcroze approach. This article looks at the Orff approach, the Kodály approach, and the Suzuki approach in depth, starting with a brief review of each approach, followed by the comparison of the three from aspects of Zone of Proximal Development theory, movements, speech and language, team-work and cooperation, process of music learning, and specialties. Both the positive and negative implementations are provided from the point view of students and families, and teachers.

Keywords: the Orff method, the Kodály method, the Suzuki method.

1. Introduction

Music teaching faculties are quite commonly describing themselves as Orff, Kodály, or Suzuki teacher. Without a comparison between these names and the methods behind them, people are easily troubled by a couple of questions. These questions include what exactly they mean by that method, what does it mean for students to study with a certain approach and what are the similarities and differences between these approaches. This study addresses approaches to music teaching, compares the three approaches, and seeks to broaden the understanding of these approaches by posing the positive and negative implementation of each approach.

Interestingly, all three approaches discussed in this article were invented in the first half of the 20th century. They continue to make a great impact on music educators around the world. Associations and organizations are created for music educators to expand their influence in the community. Local chapters offer a place for people who are interested in this approach to study with experienced mentors. Annual meetings are held for teachers and anyone interested in music teaching approaches to share their experience and understanding of the certain approach. While these approaches are getting more and more popular around the world, it is worth discussing their concepts and how they influence students.

In the following sections, these approaches will be briefly reviewed and examined so that the readers become familiar with the basic characteristic of each approach. It is never enough for music educators to learn about certain approaches by simply reading without ever experiencing them. While we read and join the workshops on approaches, we must keep considering how to implement these approaches with our students given the knowledge that they all have different backgrounds and experiences that may impact their method of learning.

2. A Brief Review of Music Teaching Approaches

The Orff Schulwerk or the Orff approach is developed by German composer Carl Orff and his colleague Gunild Keetman. To be more specific, the Orff Approach combines speech, movement, and music. It leads students into the music world by giving them chances to use body movements, words, and instruments to discover music and create their own musical experiences. Children create speech, movement, and music as part of their learning and growing process, emphasizing concepts and perceptual awareness the child uses in everyday life [1]. Students are the center of this approach, they experience themselves as creative people and thereby grow in their personalities [2].

Another well-known approach is the Kodály approach developed by the Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály. Students get trained in musical skills and learn the reading and writing of music in this comprehensive approach [3]. Three of the crucial aspects of the Kodály approach are folk music, solfège, and singing. Kodály believed musicianship would lead toward intellectual development and national unity [4]. As the Kodály approach might be used in different countries, teachers can choose local folk songs as the repertoires according to students' cultural backgrounds. Students can connect better with the music if they know it and love it.

Unlike the other two approaches mentioned before, the Suzuki approach developed by a Japanese educator, Shinichi Suzuki, is focusing on studio classrooms. The fact that children learn languages fluently and naturally inspired Suzuki's "mother-tongue" approach. Suzuki's approach strongly connects with how we learn to speak and how parents are involved in the process of children learning languages. The critical component of Suzuki's approach is daily listening, parent involvement, and repetition.

3. Comparison of the Three

All three approaches focus on children as individuals and help the student build musical skills step by step. Each of the approaches implies Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development and the Scaffolding theory from Constructivism. "They focus on the learning process, as a scaffold or based on the building block study of skills, and helps improve the overall well-being of the child into adulthood" [5]. From known to the unknown, teachers lead students to repeat this process and introduce them to new knowledge.

3.1 Movement

In the Orff approach, the concepts of space, time, and force are related to the awareness of the body in movement learning [1]. The Orff approach in movement also challenges students to build problem-solving and decision-making abilities through various tasks that may also involve team-works. The Kodály approach also involves body movements. While both approaches invite students to various games that involve movements, the Orff approach also invites children to use their bodies as instruments. Beginning with young children, the Kodály and Orff teacher carefully introduces movement activities that could be done by individuals or groups and are taught step by step. For example, both Kodály and Orff teachers may introduce students to a basic movement pattern, after making sure everyone knows the pattern, the teachers would ask students to make two circles with one on the inside and one on the outside; the teacher could ask the two circles moving in same or opposite directions later. Like how Orff's movement activity may include improvisation, students in Kodály's classroom will call on the movement vocabulary to create their movement [6]. In this kind of activity, teachers will first provide some vocabularies that represent movements to students, and students could pick two words to make a new movement that could be used in the later activities. Besides the movement activities, students in the Orff classroom can tap their shoulders or legs, clap their hands, or stamp their feet to make rhythm and sound. They could also use their body percussion to improvise on a learned rhythm given by the teachers.

The Curwen hand signs which Kodály incorporated in his approach with solfège developed by Guido d'Arezzo and Sarah Glover also resembled body movements. Each solfège is represented by a hand sign starting from "do" to "do" that is an octave higher, and the hand moves up accordingly and, of course, with different signs that represent different solfèges. In this method, students can connect solfège with movement; they can build a sense of the distance between the solfèges. In addition, with hand signs used in a singing circumstance, students can locate each note easier and learn the song better and faster. The solfèges fixes easily intelligible associations to the individual sounds, or rather, in deal teaching, to individual typical intervals, and melodic figures [7]. Students establish inner hearing through singing, as well as imagination. Students need to take care of the musical expression to sing well, and that is where the imagination manifests which in turn, helps to build musicality [7].

3.2 Connection with speech and language

Speech is incorporated in the Orff approach at an early stage and often is associated with rhythm training. Students introduce themselves and their hobbies to each other in the first class with a designed rhythm shown by the teacher. Nursery rhymes play an important role in the Orff classroom as children learn rhythms faster in the rhymes they are familiar with.

In the Kodály classroom, children learn rhythm by naming the rhythm syllables. Students start their experience with the Kodály approach by internalizing rhythm against the beat. As students understand that there are beats with more than one sound or syllables on a beat, teachers then name this rhythm as ta, and ti, ti. Students repeat the rhythm with rhythm syllables a couple of times. Teachers later plan lessons with various games where students can practice these rhythms [4].

Language takes a vital role in both Kodály and Suzuki's approaches. The Kodály approach emphasizes "folk song" which is characteristic of different languages. Suzuki's approach was built upon the observation of children learning languages.

3.3 Teamwork and Cooperation

One can always see teamwork in an Orff Classroom. For example, the teacher separates the students into two big groups in a movement session, one doing the fast motion and the other doing the slow motion. In each big group, students are paired with each other and mirror or shadow the motion. Each student gets a chance to be the person who leads the movement, and students get the chance to switch the big groups so everyone has the chance to do fast or slow motion.

Concrete evidence supports the fact that children studying music with the Orff approach and Suzuki approach need to cooperate with their peers and families. Teamwork is a significant component of the Orff approach, where students must work with their peers to improvise using instruments, body movements, and speeches. Children learning music by the Suzuki approach also need to work and perform with peers to learn from each other. Besides working with their peers, children in the Suzuki classroom need to practice with guidance from their parents. In this circumstance, students, teachers, and families work together to support children's musical learning process.

3.4 Process of music learning

Like Suzuki's idea that children should learn music at an early age, Kodály also believed that music education needs to begin as early as possible in a person's life to be most effective [8]. Kodály and Suzuki's approaches support the view that students need to learn music aurally and then visually. In the article, Neumann supports this idea by talking about the method of sound before sight method as an essential learning concept in the Kodály approach [8].

Orff didn't specifically point out when is a good time to start music education. For him, creativity is the keyword in music learning. He encourages his students to improvise music making to build their creativity and self-confidence. The Orff approach teaches students music without the limitation of textbooks. On the other hand, the Kodály approach relies more on existing pieces than the Orff approach, it encourages students to sight-read with the advantage of Curwen hand sign and solfèges.

3.5 Special about Orff and Suzuki

The song used in the Orff approach could be traditional or original, usually accompanied by the Orff instrument including glockenspiels, xylophones, metallophones, bass bars, and others [9]. It is fascinating that students do not need to know how to play traditional instruments in the Orff classroom. The Orff instruments including the ones listed above are un-pitched percussion instruments, barred instruments, and recorders to enrich students' musical learning experiences [5]. Students can also use their bodies as instruments, they are welcome to tap, clap, and sing in an Orff classroom.

As mentioned before, the Suzuki approach focuses more on studio teaching. Listening to music daily is a crucial concept in the Suzuki approach, as he believed that children learn music just like they learn how to speak by listening to others speaking every day. Moreover, Suzuki regarded

observations of teachers and other students as well as attendance to concerts as important factors in the music learning process, thus these activities are required so that students internalized "good" music and performance [4]. Students learn note-reading at a later stage in the Suzuki approach because they learn music expression by listening to music which means students learn the music by purely listening. The idea is to help children fully understand how to play the repertoires by listening before knowing how to read music, just like children learn to speak before they learn to read.

With the same idea of daily listening, Suzuki pointed out the vital role parents play in children's language-learning process, and they play the same role in the music-learning process. A parent is expected to attend all the child's lessons as well as take notes for children on what and how to practice [7]. Parents also support students by participating in students' practice and supervising their daily listening assignments.

Besides daily listening, children also need to revisit old pieces constantly. Any pieces learned by children can not be forgotten. As children keep learning new concepts or techniques, they are always asked to apply them to old repertoires and repeat this process constantly.

4. Positive and Negative of Implementation

Each of the music teaching approaches talked about before is not perfect. There are positives and negatives when implementing these approaches in real life. These approaches could be beneficial or harmful to students and families based on their habitus, social backgrounds, and cultural backgrounds. Teachers may also find difficulties when teaching certain approaches based on their past experiences. For this section, we are going to look at the positive and negative of implementation from two points of view -- the students and their families, and teachers.

4.1 Students and Families

As we briefly mentioned before, students in the Orff classroom do not need to learn how to play a Western traditional instrument. The Orff approach invites students to use un-pitched percussion instruments which are easy to play and students will not likely have difficulty learning how to play the instruments while improvising. Moreover, students can join an Orff classroom at any age in their lives. Although this approach was designed to teach children, there is no age limitation in real-life implementation.

The use of Curwen hand signs in Kodály is ingenious and helps students better internalize the distance between notes. For example, the starting point "do" starts around the area on the belly button with the hand sign, and "mi" is approximately under the chest. Thus students get a sense that "do" and "mi" are skipping from each other rather than a step motion.

Culture is the foundation of the Kodály approach, there are different implementations when teaching the Kodály approach from country to country because each country has its own culture. The fact that Kodály's approach views culture as a crucial factor could be positive or negative for students. It is favorable for students because the more familiar they are with their cultures, the easier for them to grasp musical concepts. However, it could be dangerous for students if a country has more than one culture. For example, there are so many cultures that are worthy of being included in the US, and the population represents a variety of cultures. Students feel ignored or abandoned if their cultures are not present in the classroom.

The Suzuki method was famous for its idea of repetition, which can be beneficial for students learning process. By looking back and practicing old repertoires, students can imply new knowledge to old pieces. It would speed up the process of internalizing the new concepts or techniques if they are put with something students already know. On the other hand, constantly reviewing old repertoires helps students keep their repertoire list growing because they do not forget what has already been learned. They can always use old repertoires in some circumstances rather than learning a new one.

Most critics point to the need for more parental involvement in the Suzuki approach [10]. As it has been mentioned before, the Suzuki approach requires a great amount of parental involvement

throughout the students learning process. Although it is ideal for parents to come to lessons and take notes for students to help them practice at home, parents only have time to participate in some of the lessons and help students practice to reach a satisfactory level due to their work.

4.2 Teachers

Teaching in an Orff classroom is enjoyable because teachers do creative games with students through movement activities, rhythm activities, and instrumental playing. However, the improvisation part of the Orff approach might be difficult because most music teachers get trained using Western classical music. They receive nearly all musical training through notated music traditions, and many music teachers do not have experience with jazz or other forms of improvisation, so they might feel uncomfortable improvising or teaching improvising to students [11]. Funding could be another struggle teachers are facing. Schools and teachers do not have enough money to purchase Orff instruments in some rural areas. Even if teachers would love to teach music classes by using the Orff approach, the shortage of funding could stop their paths.

Kodály teachers need to keep in mind that culture plays a vital role in their classroom. They need to be careful when they select the repertoires and teach songs to students. So children learn to respect other cultures and people who practice those cultures. The teacher could be considered racist if only one culture is practiced in the Kodály classroom if the country has more than one culture.

Suzuki teachers face criticism about the consequence of the intense focus on aural learning. Critics point out that students rely on listening in the daily learning process and that they become weaker at sight-reading than students who learn notation at an early stage. Students who get trained in the Suzuki method also state that they count on listening while learning and practicing a new piece. Although they are good at memorizing pieces by listening, reading notation is their weakness in instrumental playing.

5. Conclusion

This article discussed three well-known music teaching approaches with a multidimensional comparative structure. Each of these three approaches has its distinguishing characteristics and teaching philosophies. Music educators must keep in mind that students are unique in their backgrounds. Educators need to pick proper teaching approaches after careful consideration of students' backgrounds and learning styles. It is arguably true that music teaching has successfully been modernized and globalized for modern education while families with different backgrounds are still not. Bearing that in mind, it is worthy of deliberation for music teaching and music pedagogy to choose from different approaches wisely.

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