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Learning Theory- Zoltán Kodály

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Background and Foundation

Kodaly is a well-known name in many music classrooms across the globe. A native of Austria-Hungary, Kodaly was a musician and a scholar alike who was a strong advocate for music in public education. Simply put, Kodaly believed that “music is for everyone”. While “the Kodaly Approach” is most commonly spoken of in elementary or primary settings, this was not his focus. Kodaly simply advocated for music in all schools, and at this time they were very uncommon in early grade levels. Kodaly believed that music should be taught in at an early age and throughout a person’s life. He was taught music in his early years by his parents, who had no formal music education themselves and were simply amateur musicians. The path he chose in life was muchly contradicted by what those around him, who preferred he pursue the career of a lawyer and better his social-economic standing. Kodaly has always been an advocate for music, despite what the adversary might have said, his early education was based around composing and conducting. Many of the aspects of Kodaly’s learning theory are intergrated into modern classrooms, and have become commonplace whether the educators who use it are aware or not.

Ideals and Elements of the Kodaly Method

The three biggest points of the Kodaly approach are very and in many ways very common today. As previously stated, Kodaly was a strong advocate for music in all education so that everyone could take part in a musical experience so they could better be attached to their society. Along with this comes the idea that music should be a constant inclusion in daily life, and requires daily practice. Music is an

important part of life and should be practiced daily. The third leg of this ideal is that “good” music should be at the center of a child’s education. “Good” music can be defined as having good quality, but most importantly as being performed live so show the impact and the actual life of music itself, to the students at first-hand.

Integration Into the Classroom

One of the other major aspects of his learning theory involves the use of folk songs. Kodaly set out to preserve history in regards to music as well as inspiring society through music. The songs he gathered are used in many of the musical exercise he taught to teach different aspects of music and society. When he began teaching music, kodaly was very adamant about the use of ear-training and a firm aural foundation. Kodaly is credited for coining the use of a moveable “do” system of solfege that depended on the key of the piece. Kodaly was very innovative in his time, and was questioned by many people during his time for his efforts and even relived from a teaching position. Given his composition background, Kodaly was a strong advocate of the use of improvisation.

Kodaly’s method is used in today’s educational system in many more ways than most people probably realize, there are too many to list. Some of the examples of this are when a choir warms up on solfege, or sings passages in solfege to get a better aural understanding of how the music goes. The very fact that music is now apart of the public curriculum in most places and has national education standards, comes from the roots of Kodaly’s beliefs. Ensembles in schools that have regular concerts are also apart of Kodaly’s vision. The integration of movement into the music curriculum is a common element of many music learning theories, and is an important part of Kodaly’s beliefs. Movement is very common in primary schools across the globe. It is used to show several elements of music that children can easily relate and understand what they are doing. Kodaly was an innovator in music education, the modern system owes a lot to his progression and ideals of teaching music.