

NEWSLETTER

Singing to your children

When you sing to your kids, you are sharing the value of loving music



Many parents these days are quite interested in their children's musical development, but sometimes feel that their own musical skills are somewhat lacking. Parents often do not realize that professional music training is really not necessary to instill a love of music in their children – it is much simpler than that!

What can parents do to help their child with music? It's simple. Just sing with them and to them. Young children do not care if their parents can carry a tune or not. What's wonderful about kids, particularly preschoolers, is that they are your best audience. They are not focus on musical exactitude; they just want to be involved with you.

As parents, we can share music with babies in the form of finger play or games (e.g. Incy-Wincy Spider), using songs or nursery rhymes, while patting a child's foot rhythmically to the rhymes. This can still be played and enjoyed, and since the text is spoken, not sung, most parents can confidently perform the text with a sense of rhythm and fun, which is mainly what the young child is ready to absorb.

Children model many of their parents' behaviors. Parents who do not sing will more likely to have children who are uncomfortable when asked to sing even a single note. By engaging children in regular activities that involve music listening, singing and rhythmic movements to the songs will not only provide aca-

Kota Kinabalu Youth Music Festival 2010

Piano Workshop *How Effective is your teaching method?*

- * Fundamentals of effective technique – What, how & why?
- * Exams and concerts repertoire – What is important?
- * Digging deeper into the music.
- * Your turn to share.
- * Re-group and present: The discoveries / Q&A

See page 3 for more information.



ademic building blocks but also emotional ones. Songs have a way of implanting themselves in our brains and planting us firmly in time, any time in our lives. When parents sing to their kids, they are sharing the value of loving music. Try to find songs that are meaningful and enjoyable. Whether that means nursery rhymes, folk tunes or popular songs, there is no such thing as too much singing as young children love and learn through repetition.

Parents' job is to find their own voice, and learn to be comfortable with it. After all, Bob Dylan, Rod Stewart and many others who are considered to be great musicians do not possess what most of us would call a beautiful voice, and yet they are very expressive singers. If parents are concerned about how they sound when they sing, remember that singing is a learned skill, very much like shooting basketball through a hoop. Most of us possess a voice that is much better than we imagine!

Here are some tips on how to use songs and singing in everyday life, making music a joyful part of emerging literacy:

- * Make up silly songs about everyday activities, like brushing teeth, getting dressed, or cleaning up. Use familiar melody or invent your own.
- * Explore your family's roots and traditions when looking for songs to sing.
- * Go to the library to find books based on songs or music CD based on books and enjoy them with your kids.

Benefits of Singing

Many parents have heard of "Mozart Effect", a 1993 study that showed listening to Mozart increases intelligence in babies and young children. This revelation touched off a wave of classical music purchases and spin-off products. And raised a question: Does other music, such as singing simple songs, similarly boost linguistic intelligence or language development?

There are plenty of scholarly studies that show a strong relationship between singing and literacy development in pre-schoolers. Studies have shown convincingly that singing and language skills are interconnected. The patterns of words, rhymes, rhythms and tonal qualities inherent in songs are incorporated easily and naturally by children as they learn to speak and eventually to read. As children start to sing and explore sounds and put them in order, they are engaged in a developmental behavior critical not only in musical development but also in pre-reading skills.

One of the greatest ways to encourage literacy is simply to talk

to your kids and singing takes this to the next level. Critical to emerging literacy is "phonological awareness," the understanding that words are made from sounds. Three central components contribute: hearing the sounds that make up words as a precursor to spelling; singing as a way to imbue one's speaking voice with emotive qualities; and vocabulary development, which aids reading and, later, writing.

Singing together provides a joyful way to expand your child's spoken vocabulary and creates a strong bond. The mental and organizational skills of singing a song and telling a story are the same — it's about sequencing, a journey from the beginning to the end. Songs and books are both sequences of events, and so singing provides fundamental skills kids use in school.

Any exposure to music is better than none. Early music "immersion" is like growing up in a bilingual household where kids learn both languages easily and fluently. For kids who are not exposed to music early, it will never be their native tongue.



Discussion Forum

For Music Teachers, Parents and Students

Write in to share your learning or teaching experiences with us. Not all teaching methods works well with all students. We all benefits from learning from one another and sometimes, listening to what students and parents have to say may help teachers understand the needs of their students. By adjusting teaching style or methods to suit every individual needs helps to maintain student's interest in their music education. We will post one question at this forum on every issue and will post email responses to the question in our next issue. Or, just simply tell us anything you would like to share and we will post your article. Please limit your write up to no more than 150 words and email to: info@myof.org.my with the title: "Forum Discussion", including your full name, occupation and contact details.

QUESTION FOR THIS ISSUE: Music performances or competitions Vs Music Examinations. Which benefits the student more?

P I A N O W O R K S H O P

How effective is your teaching method?

Piano workshop with Robert Chamberlain



KK YOUTH MUSIC FESTIVAL 2010



DATE: 5TH & 6TH SEPTEMBER 2010 LOCATION: NEXUS RESORT & SPA, KARAMBUNAI

Workshop covers:

9:30am - 4:30pm, 6th September 2010

Fundamentals of effective technique, what, how & Why?

Exams & Concerts Repertoire: What is important?

Digging deeper into the music!

Your turn to share!

Re-group & Present: "The Discoveries / Q&A"

Piano lessons are taught by variety of different methods. Each method has its own set of strengths and weaknesses and individual teachers will have their preferences among the different methods. One should be aware that all teaching methods involve compromises and not every method works well for every student.

Our goal in this workshop is not only to impart the knowledge of one specific method but also to encourage teachers to explore different teaching methods shared by every participant in the workshop. By pointing out both strong points and criticisms of different teaching methods can provide teachers and parents with an overview of a given method's strengths and weaknesses, so that one will know what and how to supplement their teaching or improve it to make their teaching more effective and rewarding.

Log on to www.myof.org.my for more information and download booking form and schedule.

The best teachers are known to be able to tailor their teaching to student's individual needs to help them learn most efficiently, rather than being wedded in all respects to a single approach.

Robert Chamberlain

ROBERT CHAMBERLAIN studied for Bachelors and Masters degrees in Australia under Max Cooke, in Vienna as a winner of the Apex/Robert Stolz Scholarship, and at the Banff Centre for the Arts, Canada, where he worked with many distinguished international artists, such as John Perry, Peter Donohoe, Janos Starker and Lorand Fenyves.

A partner in the Melbourne based Team of Pianists, he has developed and directs the *Team's* annual *Spring Piano School* for talented school age pianists, as well as the *Weekend Retreat for Adult Piano Students*. His performing interests range from period performance to contemporary music and also include chamber and ensemble music of all kinds.

Recent concert engagements have included performances in Turkey, Malaysia and Thailand, at the 2005 Barossa Music Festival in period instrument collaborations on the music of Brahms with clarinetist Craig Hill, numerous contemporary music projects, as well

as many chamber and solo recitals, recordings and radio broadcasts. In 2008 he gave recitals, workshops and masterclasses in Bangkok for the Thailand Music Educators Association and in Kuala Lumpur for The Talent Makers music school. For four years he played in the piano trio, Trio Erytheia, presenting the Australian premieres of works by Australian and European composers as well as standard piano trio repertoire. Other chamber music collaborations have included the Hamer String Quartet and members of the Flinders Quartet, instrumentalists such as flautist Megan Sterling (Hong Kong Philharmonic), saxophonist Jason Xanthoudakis, clarinetists David Griffiths and Phillip Miechel, and vocalists such as sopranos Emily Xiao Wang and Michelle Marie Cook and Louise Page.

Robert has recorded on some 15 CD's for labels including Tall Poppies, Naxos, Move Records and VoxAustralia. As a scholar, he edited, with violinist Marina Marsden, a critical edition of Australian composer Margaret Sutherland's Sonata for Violin and Piano (Currency Press, 2000), which they also recorded on the Tall Poppies label.

Robert has adjudicated around Australia, for the Australian National Piano Award in Shepparton, for Eisteddfods and competitions in Albury, Ballarat, Wollongong and Melbourne. He also gives masterclasses and workshops in Universities and music schools on a wider range of topics, focusing in particular on teaching and learning processes, and on style and technique in piano performance.



During my music learning days, I often struggled with the history part of my music education, having to memorize details about each composer and their musical works for the sake of theory examinations. Somehow, nothing seemed to stick in my head since I did not see the relevance of what I had to memorize to the music I was playing. All I was given was a book with list of composers and their brief biography and important works. I had to memorize them, just like how I had to memorize hundreds of Italian terms and its English translation at the age of 8, when English was a foreign language to me and not taught in my school until I was 9 years old. Looking back, I wondered how I ever sat for all those graded theory exams and understood the instructions on the exam papers. I guessed the old school ways our teachers drilled us with all the past year exam papers have paid off as far as passing our examinations were concerned. Almost 90% of my music education were geared towards examinations and thus, I was only taught what I needed to know for the sake of examinations, be it theory or practical. Any area I was interested in I had to explore them on my own. My tutors did not take advantage of my talent and helped me develop what I was good at.

Only when I studied music in my college years I was properly taught about the history of western music, the different eras and its style of music. And that raised some questions: How do music teachers in Malaysia today impart their knowledge to the young music students? If my generation were taught the way I was taught, wouldn't we teach our students the same way? How much improvements have we made in the way we educate our students in the last two decades? Today, old teaching methods may not be effective towards the current generation. Parents and their children's priorities have changed. Perhaps by making the theory and history part of music education interesting and easy to understand coupled with music listening would be more effective than the old school method of teaching. Music should be taught & learnt in an enjoyable and challenging manner. Once students enjoy their lessons, wouldn't it make teaching easier and more rewarding? Over the next few issues, we will feature brief introduction to Orchestra as teaching materials with some listening suggestions for students to learn about Orchestra through music, quizzes and games. Let us explore together the various methods that will make learning enjoyable for our students.

- Editor-

The Symphony Orchestra

Orchestra - "A mixed body of instrumentalists for the performance of symphonic and other works"

(The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music)

The term orchestra derives from the Greek word *ορχήστρα*, the name for the area in front of an ancient Greek stage reserved for the Greek chorus. An **orchestra** is a musical ensemble used most often in classical music. A small orchestra is called a *chamber orchestra*.

A full size orchestra may sometimes be called a "**symphony orchestra**" or "philharmonic orchestra"; these prefixes do not indicate any difference either to the instrumental content or role of the orchestra, but can be useful to distinguish different orchestras based in the same city (for instance, the London Symphony Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Orchestra).

Classical music is not unfamiliar to most people. The fateful notes of Beethoven's Fifth, Elgar's triumphant *Pomp and Circumstance* marches and the majesty of Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March' from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* - all these classical pieces

are heard so frequently that some may not even recognize them to be so. But the beauty of all this music can only be brought to life by a symphony orchestra. Though the orchestra seems to be a random group of musicians playing different instruments, it has a long history and has evolved through the centuries to what it now is.

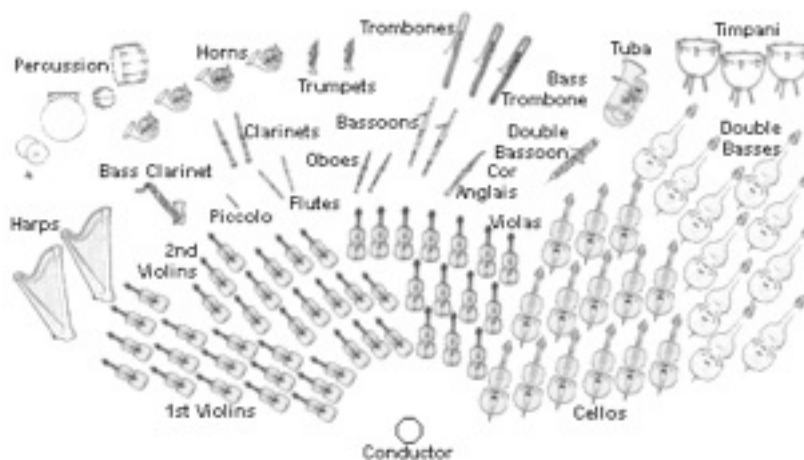
The modern symphony orchestra varies in size, but typically has strength of about 100. The largest lot of these is from the strings, which contain some 60 to 70 players. This typically comprises some 16 first and second violins, 14 violas, 14 cellos and eight to 10 doubles basses. However these numbers are sometimes reduced when playing 17th century pieces to simulate a 17th century orchestra.

Next is the woodwinds which are usually composed of two flutes, a piccolo, two oboes, one cor anglais, two clarinets, one bass clarinet, two bassoons and a

double bassoon. Then there is the brass, which normally consists two trumpets, three trombones (two tenor and one bass), a tuba and four horns.

There are variations, of course. Some pieces have parts for other instruments, the most common of which are the harp and piano. Other pieces may require a larger orchestra; Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*) cycle requires 15 woodwinds and 21 brass. The French composer Hector Berlioz even dreamt of having 242 strings and 30 grand pianos!

The layout of the orchestra also varies, but it generally follows a tried-and-tested format. The players are seated in a semicircle facing the conductor, with the strings right in front. The woodwinds are usually behind the strings and behind them the brass. The percussion is normally sited right at the edge of the semicircle.



TYPICAL LAYOUT OF A MODERN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

This layout is the most commonly used, but there are many other possible ways to arrange the players, and the decision ultimately lies with the conductor. The layout may also be affected by factors such as the shape and size of the stage used.

HISTORY

There probably would have been orchestras of some sort ever since musical instruments were invented, with a group of musicians playing together. However the roots of the symphony orchestra as we know it can be traced back to the 17th century.

In the early 17th century there existed small groups of musicians that played a random assortment of instruments. However, the organization of these groups varied.

It was only when Montverdi established the opera genre in Italy that a standard was first set for a group of musicians playing together. Monteverdi ensured that the singers had a body of accompanying instruments, most of which were viols, predecessors of today's stringed instruments.

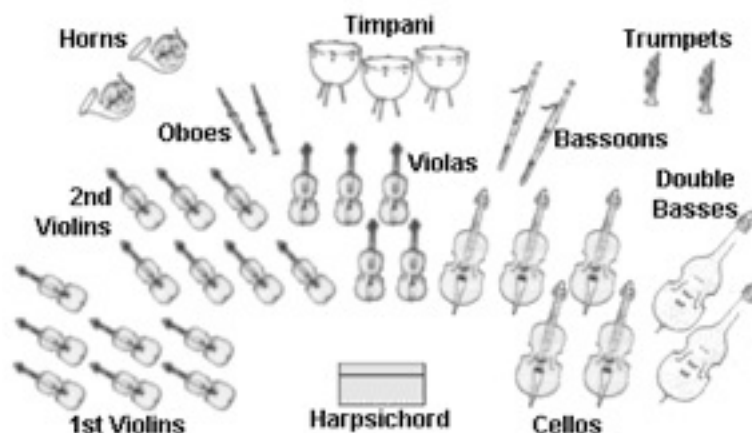
The importance of string groups was increased when Lully, court composer to Louis XIV of France, established a string orchestra called the '24 Royal String Players.' String groups formed following that had a maximum of some 25 players, but a smaller group was the norm as most composers usually wrote for strings or woodwind and a single keyboard instrument.

Towards the latter part of the 17th and early 18th centuries, Italian violinists-composers such as Correlli, Torelli, Tartini and Vivaldi established the concerto grosso and the solo string concerto, and the development of these greatly bolstered the importance of string orchestras.

The early composers wrote simple pieces, placing emphasis on

treble and bass lines. The first and second violins played in unison a third apart, and the violas (and often the double bass) doubled the cello part. Other instruments like recorders, horns or timpani, were added as required by each composer, sometimes as soloists, or to provide special effects. There was also a harpsichord continuo, which 'continually' filled in the harmony, reinforced by a single cello, the basso continuo.

Compared to the early part of the 17th century, the orchestral sounds were definitely fuller and richer. The size of the orchestra grew to about 35 members, however this still varied widely in different areas. It was during this period that instrumental music grew in stature to match that of vocal music.



Typical late 17th and early 18th century orchestra

The end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th saw the beginnings of the Classical period. The woodwinds took their place as a proper section, usually combined in pairs. The use of a pair of horns gradually replaced the continuo, filling out the texture of the orchestra. This combination of instruments is known popularly as the 'Classical Orchestra'; this is because most

works of this period, including Haydn's last symphonies and Beethoven's earlier ones, were composed for this particular combination.

A famous orchestra of this time period was the Mannheim Orchestra, which numbered 46 players in 1782, comprising of skilled musicians who were considered the best in Europe. Mo-

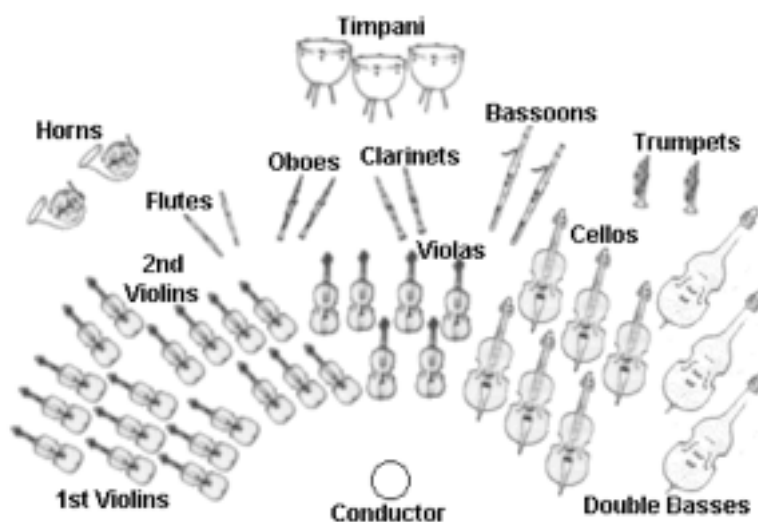
zart was said to have been influenced by the performance of their clarinetist, leading him to use the clarinet in his works as often as he could. The Orchestra had a reputation for elegant and precise performances and was also renowned for its use of effective variations in dynamics.

Mozart influenced the development of the Orchestra in his

own way. His works led to the acceptance of the woodwinds as a complete and independent section of the orchestra, as well as causing the decline in the use of the continuo. He also experimented with the timbres of the various instruments, mixing them in new ways. Haydn, too, had a hand in this stage of the evolution of the orchestra.

Towards the end of the Classical period Beethoven brought about some innovations in orchestral arrangement; these included the addition of instruments such as the piccolo, double bassoon, bass drum. The scores for cello and bass in his works were separated, which was uncommon for that time. It is mainly due to him that the standard woodwind sec-

tion was fixed to be the 'double wind' configuration, with 2 of each instrument. His brass section was also enlarged, for example his 9th Symphony required 4 horns. These changes required a larger string section to balance the overall sound of the orchestra, and this in turn led to an increase in the power of the orchestra.



Typical Classical Orchestra Layout

In the Romantic period not only was there a marked change especially in the size of the orchestra, there was also a change in the style of music they performed. Composers tended to experiment with the harmonies, leading to the use of discords to heighten emotional effects. Melodies also became more song-like.

The brass section was greatly increased; trombones were now a fixed member of the orchestra. In addition, the valve mechanism and key system were perfected, increasing the flexibility of wind instruments in general. The choice of wind instruments, including woodwind, increased. The number of percussion in-

struments also grew, allowing more colorful effects. As before, the number of string players had to increase to balance out the orchestra.

One of the more innovative composers was Wagner; he exploited the new developments in wind instruments. Breaking away from the traditional double wind, he experimented with triple wind, and in *The Nibelung*, he used 4 flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons, and 8 horns together with a wide variety of brass instruments for a total of 36 wind players. He also scored for 2 sets of timpani, 6 harps and 64 strings.

In the latter part of the 19th century the orchestra was often enlarged, German composers like Strauss and Mahler having followed Wagner's cue. French composers, however, used smaller orchestras, emphasizing instead clarity and distinctive timbres.

The 20th century was a time of innovation; traditional views of the orchestra were challenged. John Cage, an American composer, used the piano in such a way as to simulate a whole percussion ensemble. Other composers such as Webern combined the tone sounds of instruments in different ways. Electronic methods were also used to create new sounds and effects.

Next issue features: Learning through music