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**‘What are the main teaching disciplines of the Suzuki, Kodaly and Orff Schulwerk teaching approaches, and how can it be determined which one of these is the most effective?’**

There are several ways in which a modern musician can learn his/her technique. While many are self-taught players, most musicians start from a young age, and learn not just how to play an instrument, but also *why* they play in their style, and what makes music work. For years many influential music educators have developed and used some fantastic teaching methods, and have influenced millions of teachers worldwide. While many of these methods have flaws, most are very effective and work especially well with children. My study will focus on three of the main international teaching methods – namely Suzuki, Kodaly, and Orff. I will explore these techniques by giving an overview and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of three major teaching methods. I will also explain each method and discuss how and where these methods are applied, comparing their strengths and weaknesses in terms of music tuition. I will decide which of these three methods may be the best by discussing the development of technique, student experience, emphasis on performance, and repertoire.

One of the most well known teaching methods is the Suzuki method created by Shinichi Suzuki. Suzuki was born in 1898 and grew up surrounded by the sounds of violins at his father’s violin factory. He began to teach himself the violin at the age of seventeen, and eventually began taking lessons at the age of twenty two. Using the Suzuki Method, instrumental lessons usually start before the age of 5. Suzuki recognised that a huge amount of development occurred in the early years of life, and believed that they should not be ignored (Suzuki, 1973). Students did not just go to lessons to learn their instruments, but also to observe other children playing and learning. A beginner may observe others for up to a year before even touching an instrument themselves. This encourages children to aspire to be as good as others as well as accustoms them to playing in public (Suzuki, 1973).

Suzuki also believed that learners should listen intently to a piece of music before they learn how to play it. He believed that children should learn how to play an instrument first before any written music is

introduced to them, giving them a sophisticated ear for pitch and tone which enables a child to play with more sensitivity. He pointed out that in conventional schooling; books are introduced to children only after they have been speaking the language for several years (Kelly, 2001). Suzuki believed in complete mastery of a piece of music. Students of the Suzuki Method continue learning a piece of music long after they have perfected the notes and they are taught to play from memory, to enhance proper technique and musicality. They will also review old pieces, where they can have some creative input, using techniques learned from higher graded pieces of music (Mills, 2005).

In addition to individual lessons, Suzuki students learn in groups, sometimes once a week. This gives them the social benefit of playing music with other musicians, and also helps some students become inspired by learners of a higher ability to them (Suzuki, 1973). In addition, it gives them the freedom of releasing their own individual sound into a larger whole. Playing in public is a big part of the Suzuki method. Not only would the teacher organise concerts for learners to play in, but each individual lesson was also observed. The target of getting learners used to playing in public, is to make them unafraid of playing to other people, and instead to enrich the lives of others (Mills, 2005). Suzuki said that children learn to speak their national language because they speak it every day, therefore music should be practiced every day. To help children understand this he said 'Only practice on the days you eat' (Suzuki, 1973).

It is important to remember that this method was not created solely for the purpose of teaching musical instruments, but also to create 'high ability and beautiful character' (Suzuki, 1973). Suzuki said 'I want to make good citizens. If a child hears fine music from the day of his birth and learns to play it himself, he develops sensitivity, discipline, and endurance. He gets a beautiful heart.' (Suzuki, 1973).

Many parents of the children who have used Suzuki's training have been very pleased with the benefits for their children. One parent, Jan McNair, who also studies Suzuki violin with her four year old son said:

'Ben is discovering the joy of doing something because you've worked to do it. What he's doing now will be second nature to him. This is the way to learn.' (suzukiassociation.org, accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009)

Charlotte Johnson from Papillion Nebraska also takes part in a Suzuki programme with her ten year old son Christopher and had the following to say:

‘They learn really good music right away, and they develop good memories. Developing self-esteem is another plus, he can get up in front of people and it’s no big deal.’ (suzukiassociation.org, accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009)

However, there have been many criticisms of Shinichi Suzuki’s method. One of these is the fact that musicians who learn through this method are not as competent at sight reading as other musicians. Due to the focus of the Suzuki method being to study a piece of music thoroughly, Suzuki musicians are not practicing simply getting a piece of music and trying to play through it for the first time (Kelly, 2001). A similar criticism is that musicians are introduced to a form of rote learning and do not look far enough into a piece of music. Critics accuse Suzuki students of learning their instrument through repetition and memorization, rather than looking at a piece of music in detail and deconstructing it, thus they learn nothing of improvisation, sight-reading, or advanced musical skills (Kelly, 2001). Critics consider that a practitioner of the Suzuki method gains no real knowledge of how to play their instrument. It should be remembered however, that Suzuki never intended his teachings to become a method, but rather, he intended to create beautiful character in his students through the learning of music.

Another popular teaching method is the Kodaly method, not fully developed by Zoltan Kodaly himself, but also partly by those who were influenced by his outlook on music education (DeVries, 2001). Kodaly’s philosophy on music education was ‘Music belongs to everyone, and is necessary for healthy human development’ (Choksy, 1981). Kodaly strongly believed that music literacy was the right of every human being, and he stressed that anyone who is able to read words has the ability to read music. He felt that education was not complete without music as a core part of the curriculum, and that music should be just as important in schools as language and mathematics. (Choksy, 1981).

Kodaly’s method uses singing as a foundation for musicianship, and any young child learning music for the first time will start with the voice. Kodaly stressed that learning how to sing was the best way in which the

musical ear could be properly trained, and that even instrumentalists must begin with the voice in order to understand music outside of the mechanics of their instruments (Choksy, 1988). Like most music educators, Kodaly also believed that music education should begin at the earliest age possible, and explained that children aged between three and seven are most sensitive to music. Kodaly was of the opinion that only music of the highest quality should be used in music education, claiming that if children hear inferior music, then they are less likely to appreciate higher qualities of music as adults (DeVries, 2001).

In *Re-evaluating Common Kodaly Practices*, Peter DeVries highlights the benefits of the Kodaly method. He claims that studies have shown that the Kodaly Method improves [intonation](#), rhythm skills, music literacy, and the ability to sing in increasingly complex parts. The Kodaly method greatly aids musicians' practice of inner hearing. In Becky Welsh's essay *The Importance of Inner Hearing*, she describes how Kodaly has contributed to many musicians development of inner hearing:

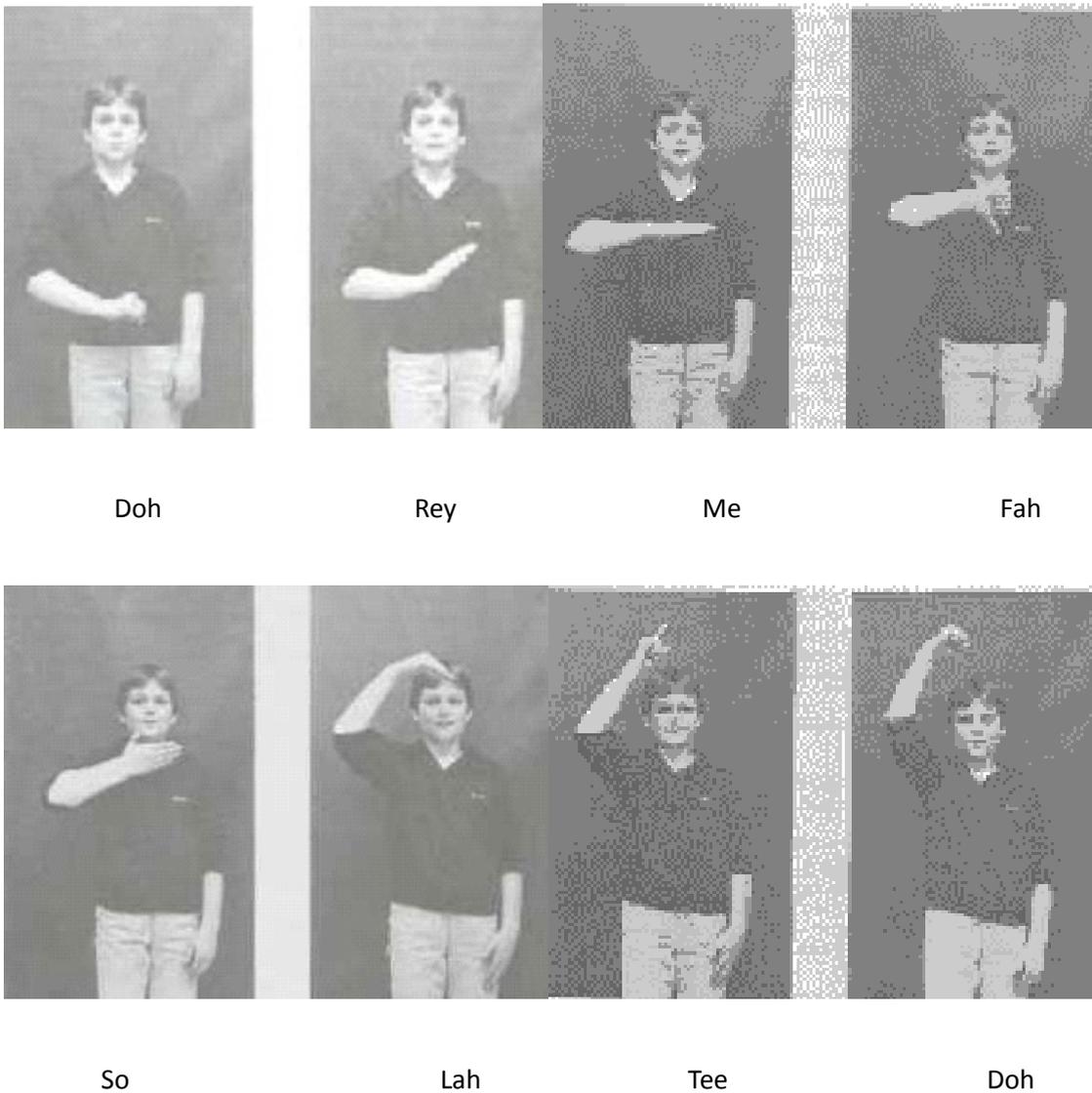
'Zoltan Kodaly developed a system of music education in order that inner hearing could begin to be developed in children from a young age. His theory was that if children began their musicianship training using his method from an early age, by the time they reached adulthood the system would be so ingrained in them that it would be second nature. Sight-reading or sight-singing would not be a struggle, nor would difficult enharmonic keys. Memorisation would be taught from an early age, first through simple folk songs, so that later it became a natural progression of learning music. Pitching any note or interval is also simplified, as the musician will be able to hear inside the head how it should sound' ([www.britishkodalyacademy.org](http://www.britishkodalyacademy.org) , accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008).

Indeed, part of Kodaly's method enables musicians to sight-read or sight sing fluently. The average Kodaly learner will warm their voice up with scales, then move on to a piece such as *Buy My Tortillas* (Figure 1.1).



inner hearing is the use of hand signs to communicate notes. A selection of hand signals were invented to represent each note in a scale, using Doh-Rey-Me-Fah-So-Lah-Tee-Doh, as represented in figure 1.2 below.

Figure 1.2 – Hand signs used in Kodaly’s teaching methods.



Although at first this sequence might be very hard for children to remember, it can be used to develop a musician’s inner hearing by demonstrating a song to a class purely through hand signs, forcing the class to hear the piece in their heads.

As well as notes being simplified in this way, rhythms are too. Kodaly believed in relating the names of rhythms to vocal sounds as this enables children to more easily learn rhythms. For example, two quavers would be 'Tee-Tee', or a crotchet would be 'Tah'. This is intended to give children a much clearer indication of what it is they have to play in a piece of music. The idea is used in all rhythmic patterns, so it is easy to explain the rhythms in a song (Choksy, 1988).

When asked by the British Kodaly School, all of the students had some very positive remarks. For example, one of the older students, Hannah Burd, said:

'Where does Kodaly end and the rest of my experience begin? I have been taught it since I was five years old and it has always been bound up with happy feelings! My fingers are more co-ordinated when I play the flute, I am not afraid to sing aloud, I can feel the rhythms on the stave. But it's not just musical training, it's emotional therapy. Kodaly attracts inspired people – and it has made me truly inspired!'

([www.britishkodaly.school.org.uk](http://www.britishkodaly.school.org.uk), accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009).

Another student, Davida Baker said:

'Kodaly helps children with intonation, co-ordination, and harmonic hearing – but also gives them the confidence to perform in front of others, and in helping them to realise that they have musical ability. Kodaly is for everyone, from those who already have instrumental tuition to those who can't sing a simple melody. There isn't a single child who doesn't benefit. If everyone learned Kodaly, the amount of children learning music in Britain would increase dramatically as more people would enjoy it!'

([www.britishkodaly.school.org.uk](http://www.britishkodaly.school.org.uk), accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009).

One disadvantage with this method, however, is that too much emphasis is placed on singing, and children may have to wait far too long to begin learning any instruments, making it difficult to learn any musical skills beside singing. Although children may learn inner hearing from a very young age (Which is obviously very important), they do not get the chance to learn any other musical techniques because all emphasis is placed on learning to sing.

Another criticism of this method is that teaching this to small children might be too difficult; the hand signs

in particular would be quite hard for children to learn (Chosky, 1988). Also, the general reading of advanced pieces of music it hard for children to get the hang of right away, and although a lot of time is spent on learning this, a lot of children might just simply give up, thinking that they won't ever be able to learn music, as they are almost pushed into the deep end (Chosky, 1988).

One major teaching approach for music education for children is the Orff Schulwerk, Schulwerk translating literally as 'Schoolwork'. It was developed by German composer Carl Orff in the 1920s while he was the musical director of the Gunther-Schule in Munich, which was a school for music and dance. Many music educators consider it important that this approach is not spoken of as a method, because there is no systematic process to follow (Wheeler, 1972). Instead, there is a target which children can reach by breaking down the steps to get there to their simplest form.

The foundations of the Orff Schulwerk were laid out in the Gunther-Schule. There were seventeen students at the school and all were aged between eighteen and twenty two. It came to an end in 1944 when the Nazi's confiscated it, and it was destroyed along with all its materials the year after in an allied bomb attack (Goodkin, 2002). However, most of the Gunther-Schule students went on to become notable dancers or teachers. One of the students, Gunild Keetman, was one of the people responsible for later transferring ideas from the Gunther-Schule to teaching children (Goodkin, 2002). The Orff Schulwerk approach, like the Kodaly method, uses the voice as the heart of music education. It involves singing in groups and performing voice instrumental music, and playing various tuned percussion instruments such as xylophone, metallophone, and glockenspiel. Orff encouraged his students to improvise music making, thus building their self confidence, and allowing their minds to become more creative. Also, because children sing in groups, this makes them realise the joy in group co-ordination (Wheeler, 1972).

This approach also encourages the participation of other adults and parents in the learning process, bringing the role of the parent into music education. The approach intends to allow children's interest in learning and making music to come by itself; Orff hoped that when a child or a group created an interesting piece of music, then the desire to record it would arise. His belief was that then, this would be the

inspiration for children to develop musical skills, and then the child would gain a huge interest in learning formal music (Goodkin, 2002). Percussion is also a big part of the Orff Schulwerk. Orff believed that rhythm was a natural basic form of human expression.

Orff Schulwerk music is based on simple variations of rhythmic patterns, making fantastic musical forms which are easy for the children to learn (Wheeler, 1972). Rhythmic ideas are also developed and through the use of “body percussion” – clapping and finger snapping, for example, and small percussion instruments like wood block, triangle, tambourine, and various types of drums. The experience of playing together as an ensemble fosters sensitive listening and the enjoyment and satisfaction of group music making in a supportive atmosphere. It also allows students of varying ability levels to contribute successfully to the total effort (Goodkin, 2002).

The administrators from the American Orff Schulwerk Association had some very positive remarks to make about the approach. William B. Stroud , Ed.D said:

‘The sixteen years that I served as an elementary principal provided me with many positive and lasting memories. Among the most rewarding was the good fortune to spend fifteen years in schools where students had a music program utilizing Orff Schulwerk. The benefits of this approach were immediately evident whenever I would walk into a music class regardless of the grade level. The students were actively engaged and could demonstrate they understood the concepts being taught. This was also true when the instruments were used to deepen the students’ understanding of the concepts being taught in Social Studies and other subjects.’ ([www.aosa.org](http://www.aosa.org), accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009)

Douglas Wilson also made an interesting comment:

‘Orff Schulwerk encourages students to be creative and engages them in the creative process. Through Orff Schulwerk, creative thought is cultivated and honored. The Orff Schulwerk philosophy can be the basis for

creative writing, scientific thought, and math problem solving.' ([www.aosa.org](http://www.aosa.org), accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009)

While these three teaching styles all have some commonalities, there are some big differences between them. The three teaching approaches all have two major similarities. Firstly, they all share the same idea of starting music education at a very young age. Suzuki, Kodaly, and Orff all recognised that learning music at the earliest age possible was important because a huge amount of development occurs in the early stages of life. This is also a theory shared among many music educators across the world (Campbell, 2001). The other similarity is that these three approaches believe that music education should start with the voice. But with this similarity comes some major differences.

Suzuki began with the voice, but quickly moved on to instrumental lessons, whereas Kodaly placed a huge emphasis on the importance of learning music as a whole through the voice. Suzuki also believed in listening intently to a piece of music before learning to play or sing it. This goes against the teachings of both the Kodaly method and the Orff Schulwerk. Orff, for example, encouraged his students to improvise music, and this would never happen with the Suzuki method.

There are differences between the Orff Schulwerk and the Kodaly method in this aspect too, however. Kodaly relied on pieces of music that already existed, and encouraged his students to sight-read, while Orff placed less emphasis on reading music, and rather encouraged children to improvise music to aid his plans of children *wanting* to learn music, rather than being forced into it, or ignoring it completely.

Of course, the one thing that stands out with the Suzuki method which makes it different to the other two is the fact that Suzuki never intended his method to become just that. Suzuki intended to create beautiful character in people by introducing them to fine music, and by teaching them how to make music. He believed that this would make people more sensitive. That is the major difference between Shinichi Suzuki's teaching method and any other approach.

But of course, Suzuki's method was not purely based on creating beautiful character; his teaching methods

were valid and are still used throughout the world today. The Suzuki method agrees with the Orff Schulwerk in that musicians should play in groups. Apart from the social benefit, this is also good because playing with other musicians will ultimately develop feel. The difference between these two approaches however, is that the Orff Schulwerk students will only sing in groups, whereas the Suzuki students will play (and learn) instruments in groups.

Another advantage of the Suzuki method which makes it stand out is the fact that Suzuki's students would learn to play pieces of music from memory. Although it has been argued that this makes the students perhaps a little too mechanical in the way they play, it should be remembered that Suzuki encouraged his students to review old pieces so that they can add more technique to it learned from more advanced pieces of music. It can be said that this would also give a musician much room to improvise over pieces of music, and develop their own style at the same time. This is one major difference between Suzuki's method, and the other two approaches; Kodaly's method and Orff's approach rely on either sight-reading or improvisation. Suzuki's method appears to be the only one of the three which allows students to thoroughly study a piece of music so that it has been completely mastered.

One thing that the Orff Schulwerk has that the other two methods don't appear to have is the emphasis on learning rhythm. Rhythm is one of the most important things a musician can learn, as it gives the foundations to a much higher level of study. Learning rhythms is a huge step forward in being able to master other instruments. Orff realised how important rhythm was, and stressed that children should learn this as soon as possible. He taught rhythm on tuned percussion instruments such as xylophone and glockenspiel so that students could gain the benefit of learning rhythm and note values, while still learning about things like scales and key signatures.

Kodaly taught rhythm by using words to match certain rhythms (Like 'Tee-Tee' for two quavers), but again, his method is somewhat limited to the voice. Suzuki taught various instruments, but these were mostly string, brass or wind instruments, with limited percussion lessons.

Kodaly's strength lies in his method's ability to thoroughly teach musicians how to inner hear. His system of

hand signs is very unique, and works very effectively, making for better musicians. Of all the methods I have discussed, I think that Kodaly's method may be the strongest. All of these methods and approaches are aimed more specifically at children, but it is only Kodaly's that will make for better musicians, when the children have grown into adults. Kodaly realised that inner hearing is one of the most important things we can learn as musicians, and decided through his use of hand signs that this would be the fastest way for people to learn this difficult skill.

Both the Suzuki method and the Orff Schulwerk are fantastic approaches to music education, but there are two major flaws. Firstly, Suzuki's method is not really a teaching method for students to learn music, but rather he used music as a way to create better individuals. Orff Schulwerk is a great method, but it relies too much on children gaining an instinct to learn music themselves. A lot of children will not want to take up an instrument when they are older, and so music education will stop at a very early age, having learned only the foundations of their instruments.

Taking now into consideration the four factors mentioned earlier (development of technique, student experience, emphasis on performance, and repertoire), it is easier to judge which of these methods is the most successful.

Firstly, development of technique. There is a big difference in the techniques of Kodaly and Suzuki, in that Kodaly starts each pupil off with the voice, whereas the Suzuki method can start off with an instrument. Kodaly believed that a musician could not fully understand another instrument without understanding the voice. This may be more effective than just diving into learning an instrument, because some of the foundations of understanding music can be learned through understanding the voice, especially through the method in which Kodaly uses. Kodaly's use of hand signs to help children to be able to inner hear is a very important development that can be used to help musicians understand most other instruments. This is usually learned at such a young age that the musician is set up to more easily learn other instruments early on in life.

This is where Suzuki's method can be weak; not everyone can just pick up an instrument and learn it really

quickly, even with proper tuition and guidance. Instrumental lessons usually begin at a very young age in Suzuki's method, and yes, this will enable children to learn faster at a hugely developmental stage in their lives, but without the foundation of learning to sing first, Suzuki's students will struggle more than Kodaly's. It can be a little more difficult however, to determine whether Orff's approach is stronger in this aspect. The Orff Schulwerk also uses singing as the heart of music education, but it differs from the Kodaly method because it focuses group singing. However, it can be argued that Kodaly's method is stronger because of its hand signs technique which enables children to quickly develop inner hearing.

As for student experience, all of the approaches had students and parents who would say nothing but positive things about the teachings. However, the most effective method could be determined by examining exactly what points of each method are being praised by students and parents.

For example, Suzuki's students and parents praise the method for its ability to build confidence and self-esteem. This (although a very positive thing and what Suzuki intended) may make the method a little weaker than the others when it comes to the actual learning of music and musical instruments. Suzuki's method after all was never really intended as a music learning method, but as a method to create character in its pupils.

When compared to the Kodaly method in this aspect, we can see that Suzuki's method is in fact a little weaker. Kodaly's method is also praised by its students for being able to build confidence and self-esteem, but it is also praised for being able to teach students to play their instruments at a high standard, thus making it a more effective teaching method than Suzuki's.

The Orff Schulwerk on the other hand, is praised by its administrators as an approach that not only helps students thoroughly learn an instrument but is also used as a foundation to learn other creative or even academic skills. This could be argued either way however, some may see this as the fact which makes the Orff Schulwerk the best method straight away, whereas others might argue that if music is just being used as a foundation to learn other skills, then the focus might be off the actual learning of music. However, what

we can learn by comparing these three methods by assessing student experience is that the Kodaly method and the Orff Schulwerk are both more effective than the Suzuki method, when it comes to actual music education.

Emphasis on performance is an important part of any method. If a method has a bigger emphasis on performance, then it will help the students to be more confident, and confidence is an extremely important part of being a musician. Suzuki believed in frequent public performances, so that performing is natural and enjoyable (Suzuki, 1973). This makes the method stand out as being one of the best teaching methods, because this builds confidence and makes music feel more natural to the students every time they play. With Kodaly's method, there isn't as much emphasis on performance as there is on performance techniques (Holding the violin bow correctly etc). This makes Kodaly's method a little weaker than Suzuki's for this factor. There also isn't as much emphasis on performance in the Orff Schulwerk, thus making Suzuki's method the most effective of the three in this aspect.

Suzuki also had a huge range of literature published in both audio recordings and in sheet music for each instrument. Suzuki's repertoire was very innovative for its time and this was shown when Suzuki required that quality recordings of beginners pieces were to be made by professional musicians (Suzuki, 1973).

Suzuki's repertoire usually consisted of a series of books for each instrument starting with quite a simple book one, and moving all the way up to sometimes book ten, which would be far more complicated (SAGWA.org). The first book for each instrument would contain pieces of music written by Suzuki, or famous folk songs. As the books continued however, the pieces were those composed by some of the greatest composers such as Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart (SAGWA.org)

Kodaly's method drew materials from two strict sources: authentic folk music and good quality composed music (Choksy, 1988). Unlike Suzuki, Kodaly students were to study pieces of music that were recommended to them rather than from books constructed purely for the Kodaly method. This could be seen as evidence that the Kodaly method is weaker than the Suzuki method, as there has not been much time spent actually constructing coursework for students. However, this could also be an advantage for Kodaly students, as

their coursework could easily be built to suit their individual needs.

The Orff Schulwerk’s repertoire is much simpler than both the Suzuki and Kodaly methods. The Orff approach is mostly focused on children, and focused on trying to keep children interested in learning music and being creative themselves, so a lot of the music is nursery rhymes or original music created by the children themselves (Goodkin, 2002).

Suzuki proves to be the strongest method in this case, but whether it is wholly the most effective method is more debatable. To help determine which method is the most successful, I have constructed a table below (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 – Comparison of the three teaching methods.

	Development of technique	Student Experience	Emphasis on performance	Repertoire
Suzuki	Students study a piece thoroughly before they attempt to play it	Suzuki’s method has been found by parents to be very helpful in making children more confident, and building their self esteem	Frequent public performances	A wide series of books ranging from foundations of music to very complex pieces of music
Kodaly	Students learn the foundations of music through singing first to develop inner hearing, making it much easier to learn an instrument	Students believe that Kodaly’s method has helped them to play musical instruments to a very high standard	More emphasis on performance <i>techniques</i>	Coursework is selected from recommended pieces of composed music
Orff Schulwerk	This approach intends to make children inspired when they are young to learn a musical instrument so that the desire will arise to learn formal music	Administrators believe that Orff Schulwerk not only teaches children to play music, but also builds the foundations for students to aspire in other subjects such as maths and English.	No real emphasis on public performance	Simple music such as nursery rhymes and original music composed by children

From looking at the table which has been constructed by taking all the information mentioned earlier, it can be said that the Orff Schulwerk is a great teaching method, but it is limited to children, and is designed so that children may or perhaps may not want to take up music as a core study. Suzuki is also a fantastic method, but it is less focused on creating fine musicians than it is on creating beautiful character.

Kodaly's method may be the strongest of the three, as not only has it been praised by its students, but it has also proven to be very effective in getting musicians to develop the foundations of music at a very early stage, and building them up to become great musicians as they get older.

Of course, this does not take anything away from the other two methods. Suzuki's can be the better of the three based on repertoire and development of technique alone. But it is Kodaly's method of hand signs and other techniques which help to develop the most important inner ear of a musician which makes his method stand out against the other two. And Orff's inspirational method is fantastic as it allows children not only to aspire in music, but in other school subjects too, but this means it is not as fully focused on music as Kodaly's is.

In conclusion, although they all have some minor flaws, I have found the three teaching approaches I have discussed to be very effective, especially with young children. I have discussed the methods used in each approach, and have highlighted major advantages and disadvantages. I have also compared the three approaches, and found some huge similarities, like the fact that each method recognises that music education should start at the youngest age possible. I have assessed the three methods and determined that Kodaly's may be the strongest of the three. I decided this by comparing certain aspects and determining from this which method is the most effective. I have found this study fascinating, and have found all three methods to be truly inspirational.

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