

Waldorf Education Your Questions Answered

How and why does music feature so predominantly in your school?



Music in the Waldorf curriculum awakens and nurtures the deep inner life of the child. It is studied both as a discrete discipline and most importantly as a vital part of the pedagogy and is an integral part of everyday life in our classes.

As with all Waldorf subject's music mirrors the ages and phases of child development engaging the soul activities of thinking, feeling and willing. When we create music we engage every aspect of our body with our lungs filling with air, the rhythm flowing through our beating heart into our limbs, the melody carrying through our thinking capacity, and the experience of harmony moving back through our heart and into our feeling life. It helps to cultivate the very forces necessary to be able to meet the challenges of the world with enthusiasm and confidence.

"If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music." — ALBERT EINSTEIN

If we learn to listen, we can become better creators in our world. Singing and playing music also involves active listening requiring you to be more present and increasing your awareness of others and eventually creating a deeper understanding of music whether it is from different cultures, historical periods or places. A love for music can be a life-long source of intellectual interest, emotional support and spiritual sustenance.

"Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything." — PLATO

In the early years, the students are introduced to music in school as a natural part of their daily life. They hear music without the need to consciously notice or analyse that it is different from speech. This can lead to responses such as spontaneous imitated singing and dancing. Steiner's indications suggest that before the age of nine, learning in this and other arts subjects should be a natural imitative process without artificial and abstract concepts. The young child should be first immersed in a variety of musical rhythms, celebration of the seasons, and in particular weekly and daily activities. In the kindergarten and our younger classes, you will often find the hauntingly beautiful pentatonic or 5-note-scale songs that do not fully center on a dominant tone. It reproduces an ethereal heavenly state that mirrors the creative, dreamy imaginative state the children dwell in. The pentatonic scale is found in nearly all world cultures including Native American, most Asian cultures, Ancient Egypt, and in Ancient Greece, where Pythagoras based his "harmony of the spheres" on the five planets. The children sing together as a whole class, thus mirroring Steiner's philosophy of education from the "whole to the part". You will also hear the students practicing playing their recorders to simple tunes, imitating their teachers fingering and playing by ear as a whole class.



Steiner remarked, "A musical tone lies at the foundation of everything in the physical world".

When students approach the nine-year change, they become more independent thinkers and experience this through their capacity to hold their own vocal part and, thus, sing rounds. Harmony, which is expressive of more subjective feelings, can really be understood from the age of nine onwards. As the child's soul and spirit become more integrated in their physical body, listening develops more and more consciously and is able to provide information about how music is constructed and conveys its 'meaning'. This in turn, informs the students' musical decisions in performance and creating original music.



In Class 3 we introduce their first stringed instrument practicing the violin in small groups and as a whole class. They are now able to engage with more complex forms of understanding expressed practically through singing, instrumental playing, creating and responding to music. Music notation is introduced through the violin programme and the music main lesson in Class 4. At this point students are also encouraged to take up individual music tuition if they are interested.

As students move through to Class 5 a wider variety of instruments are introduced. Classes form small and large ensembles playing strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion. In the upper classes they also form bands or carry their own individual line in a trio or quartet. Vocal music evolves from singing simple songs, waiata and rounds as a class to singing more complex arrangements.

If you walk through the campus during the day you will hear singing and instrumental playing coming out from various corners of the school. You will also see many examples of our music curriculum with wonderful performances from our students at festivals and in their class plays.

*Music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy.
Music is the electrical soil in which the spirit lives, thinks and invents.*
Ludwig van Beethoven



Whilst music undoubtedly provides opportunities for personal skill development and performance achievement, it is a supremely social art that can build bridges between individuals and societies. Music is also the art that, according to Steiner, is closest to the 'will of the world' the unseen forces that shape physical existence and it is perhaps these aspects that makes it so vital a part of an effective education.

"Music is the universal language of mankind." – Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

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