

Reviewed by Corrie Box Mitchell

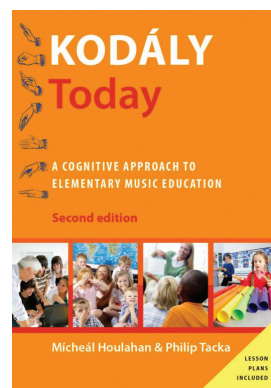
Kodály Today: A Cognitive Approach to Elementary Music Education

Written by Micheál Houlahan & Philip Tacka
New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015

teaching. In addition to multiple lesson plan templates, the authors demonstrate how each template might be presented in various grade levels, providing a clear picture of how their particular approach might look in practice in the classroom and in choral rehearsal. Teachers can find detailed outlines for teaching more concepts in the *Kodály Today Handbook Series* published for kindergarten through Grade 5, which the authors developed to provide more materials and resources. Houlahan and Tacka stress that suggestions are not prescriptive. Instead, teachers are encouraged to adapt their instruction to the context of each classroom.

Houlahan and Tacka's approach differs slightly from other Kodály-inspired approaches. The authors utilize ideas from psychologists and educators (i.e., Pestalozzi, Mason, Bruner, Gordon, and so forth) to inform their adaptation of the Kodály concept. The core principles of Kodály philosophy remain intact, including use of folk music, art music, singing, sequential learning, and teaching tools—for example, solfège and rhythm syllables. In this new edition of *Kodály Today*, Houlahan and Tacka expanded content to address current challenges for the classroom teacher, such as outcome-based evaluation, increased inclusion of children with special needs, and effective use of emerging technologies. The authors include connections to core knowledge and national music standards, and an entire chapter on using technology in the classroom.

Houlahan and Tacka employ the multiple dimensions of music—a pedagogical framework developed for the first edition of *Kodály Today*—to shape all curriculum design, promoting a holistic foundation for young musicians. The multiple dimensions of music address the need to foster children's musical development as:



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Kodály Today is an all-in-one helpful resource for both novice and experienced educators who use any pedagogical approach to teach music to children in Grades K-5, with additional advice for older beginners in upper elementary or middle school. Throughout the book's 600-plus pages, authors Micheál Houlahan and Philip Tacka provide foundational information on the philosophy and practice of the Kodály approach, and present their unique adaptation of the Kodály philosophy to music teaching. The authors suggest strategies to teach a song, develop music listening skills, build movement skills, and foster creativity. Users will find the table of contents and chapter layout in the second edition much more user-friendly than the previous version, with helpful side tabs to locate information.

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Houlahan and Tacka outline step-by-step suggestions for everything from teaching tuneful singing to incorporating harmonic progressions in melodies. They supply multiple sample lessons as examples of the Hungarian approach to music

- stewards of their cultural heritage – folk songs and art music;
- performers – music skills of singing and playing instruments;
- critical thinkers – learning melodic and rhythmic concepts and music form;
- creative human beings – improvising and composing; and
- informed audience members – listening.

The book includes multiple tables, charts, and examples that streamline the process of curricular design and lesson planning for each aspect of the music classroom.

Teachers who want to nurture more creativity in their students will find strategies to stimulate typical creative expression such as part-work, ostinatos, creative movement, and question-and-answer patterns for the elementary music classroom. Houlahan and Tacka also provide practical advice on how children can effectively learn compositional devices like retrograde, tone clusters, tone row, and polytonality that modern composers use.

Kodály Today includes an entire chapter on evaluation of both the teacher and the student. When assessing music educators, fine arts directors and other administrators may find the authors' evaluation rubrics more helpful than evaluations designed for the general classroom

teacher. The authors also make helpful suggestions for student evaluation. More extensive rubrics for evaluation of student learning are available through the *Kodály Today Handbook Series*.

With each subsequent review of *Kodály Today*, I found more strategies and approaches and new ideas to use in the classroom. Marking pages with tabs or similar devices will expedite regular access to the book's comprehensive resources.

Although the authors articulated detailed procedures and processes, they emphasized a strong focus on music making: "The techniques of teaching can never be the focus of a lesson. Techniques that are skillfully employed by a well-trained music teacher will lead to artistry in the classroom. Otherwise, music techniques will lead to dull mechanical lessons" (Houlahan & Tacka, 2015, pp. 3-4).

The information abundant in *Kodály Today* will guide you to creating more meaningful and musical learning experiences for your students. Viva la musica! ■

CORRIE BOX MITCHELL received her master's degree in music education from Texas State University, San Marcos. Corrie has presented on Kodály pedagogy, technology, and popular music in the United States. She is a doctoral student at Arizona State University and teaches in the Kodály Certification Program.