

# Colourstrings in the Ukraine

Kateryna Zavalko spoke to delegates at OXFORD 2013 about introducing 'Colourstrings' to the Ukraine

**I**n a modern world, the emphasis in understanding of nature and significance of music education is gradually shifting towards its recognition as necessary and not as supplementary or optional. After all, musical and creative education of a child, development of its natural musical talent is not only a way to expose a child to certain cultural values, but also an effective means of development of various abilities and a path to its personal self-fulfilment.

A world-famous violin training method "Colourstrings" has now been in use for more than thirty years. An outstanding educator G. Solvay developed the method around Zoltan Kodaly's principles of music education. "Colourstrings" techniques brought up numerous generations of children, producing both professional and amateur musicians alike. The method, used successfully in many countries, is almost unknown in Ukraine.

Zavalko is the first violin teacher to use this method in Ukraine. Trying to develop a comprehensive approach to implementation of this method, young violinists not only have instrumental lessons but also benefit from comprehensive pre-instrumental training. Attending violin classes, young players also participate in the "fairy strings" orchestras, outdoor events, a summer camp for young violinists "Music to children" and concerts in various cities of Ukraine. Since this method has only been practiced in Ukraine for four years, Kateryna discussed initial results of its implementation, which referred to the violin training phase based on relative solmization.

Teaching based on relative solmization is the foundation of the method. Four books 'K', 'F', 'C', 'D' contain materials that allow a child to master basic violin playing skills, educate ear for music, develop sense of rhythm and master the basics of ensemble music-making. One feature of these books is the use of colour and visual presentation. The colour is utilised to stimulate the learning process, making it simpler and more enjoyable. Rhythms, pitch, intervals, elements of *solfege* are visually illustrated to match the characteristics of children's perception. Even a child who has just started playing violin can immediately feel and differentiate distinct tones of each string. Based on this Solvay assigned a specific visual image to each string: G - string is associated with the image of a bear, D - father, A - mother, E - bird. Each string also has a related color: G - green, D - red, A - blue, and E - yellow.

Visual illustrations allow a child to master sight-reading skills, while getting familiar with violin and strings for the first



time, making this process both enjoyable and exciting. Thus, primary connections between playing, sight-reading and listening are established, providing the basis for all further work on mastering the violin. Since there is a tendency in the Ukraine towards an early start on the violin, starting from ages 3-4, "Book A" allows conducting interesting lessons with children and getting them involved in the process of music making.

From the first lessons, "Colourstrings" makes it possible to solve a complex problem - creating a foundation of quality instrumental technique. Left hand pizzicato is introduced at the first lesson along with the innovative idea of "numbered" pizzicato (pizzicato with all left hand fingers). This allows not only left hand preparation for further mastery of the fingerboard, also developing overall coordination and a sense of rhythm of the violinist. From the very first lessons, much attention is paid to the mastery of playing in different positions, playing natural octave fagolets both in the middle of the fingerboard and in the highest positions. Even four-year-old children are able to play fagolets with ease.

Relative solmization by Z. Kodaly, the basis for this method, is used to master singing and music literacy, developing playing skills. Thus, use of DO (soprano) enables the young musician to play melodies starting from any sound



using transposition, therefore mastering the entire fingerboard during the early stages.

The method combines forms of individual and group training. From the first lesson, the basics of chamber music making and ensemble playing are integrated using various duos, trios, quartets and pieces for chamber orchestras. Such a diverse ensemble playing contributes to socialization of a child and manifestation of its leadership and communication qualities.

In Zavallo's practice, individual and small group lessons (3-4 persons) are combined with orchestral playing. Training in small groups provides for several significant advantages compared to individual training only, namely: the child has a chance to both work and relax, when one child is playing, the other one listens and seeks cooperative abilities are developed and ensemble playing foundations are established.

An important motivating factor for a child in its violin training is involvement in concerts and playing in the orchestra. After all, a child can only appreciate the importance of regular home exercises when it understands a specific goal, such as participation in a concert. Monthly concerts are arranged for parents to view video footage from concerts and lessons, please visit: <http://www.worldconcert.com.ua/> or subscribe to Skripka channel on YouTube). Such concerts also serve as a

good motivation for parents, since they are more willing to further support a child in its learning process when they can see its results. During the concerts, children do not only give solo performances, but also play in the orchestra. Playing in the orchestra helps timid children to obtain first concert experiences, considering that not all children are psychologically suited to perform solo music pieces.

In summary of Salsky's "Colourstrings" method in the Ukraine, certain aspects are innovative to Ukrainian violin pedagogy. Violin teaching is divided into three stages - pre-instrumental training, playing on the basis of relative system and playing on the basis of absolute notation. Other areas of development include the internalization of musical mastery and development of the ear through use of colour and visual images, relative solmization, refining mastery of violin playing, use of "numbered" pizzicatos, playing natural flageolets over the entire fingerboard, transposition and improvisation of melodies. This allows for significant improvements in the efficiency of the initial stages of learning, laying a solid foundation of musicality in every child. "Colourstrings" contributes to the development of not only musical abilities of each child, but also attention concentration, memory, coordination, communication skills, discipline, thereby assisting in studying all other subjects. ■