

Elusive Kodály, Part II: The Hungarian Foundations of the Baby-Toddler Music Industry in the US

Angela A. Chong

Abstract: This article is the second part of a study investigating how Hungarians have influenced early childhood music education in the United States. In Part One, Chong documented the lesser-known histories of four Hungarian and American female scholar-educators who promoted the early childhood concepts at the heart of Zoltán Kodály's approach to music education, and why these concepts did not mainstream into formal US preschools. In this study, she traces Kodály's footprints to private, stand-alone baby-toddler music classes in the US. In the 2000's, baby-toddler music enrichment exploded in popularity as the children's activity industry became one of the fastest growing sectors of the US market. Only a handful of local programs are explicitly Kodály-based, such as Sing, Play, Move!, at Holy Names University's Kodály Center. Chong's search in the Los Angeles area for quality Kodály instruction for her toddlers led to highly lucrative major US providers of baby-toddler music such as Music Together and Kindermusik. These programs share Kodály pedagogical practices, such as that of singing high-quality folk music in the children's mother tongue, but map histories without reference to Hungary and attribute their approaches to American men not known as Kodály protégés. This paper explores whether the impressive profits and musical excellence of these programs can rightly be attributed to Kodály.

Keywords: *Zoltán Kodály, Katalin Forrai, early childhood pedagogy, Hungarian preschool music education, baby-toddler music industry, German tradition, Kodály soteriology, music and movement research*

Biography: Angela A. Chong (née Wu) is a D.M.A. student at USC Thornton School of Music in Music Teaching and Learning. She was a 2001/2002 U.S. Fulbright Scholar to Hungary, where she attended the Kodály Intézet in Kecskemét and performed a piano concert of Kodály, Bartók, and Liszt across Hungary and in Berlin. She has received numerous awards on the piano and violin, including First Prize at the Los Angeles Liszt Competition. Chong has a B.A. in Religion and Government and a J.D. from Harvard. She practices law in Los Angeles and teaches her five- and six-year-old children music using innovative Kodály-based pedagogies. aachong@usc.edu

I first heard about Music Together in 2016 from my best friend in Dallas. Also a new mother, she had accompanied her then-toddler and newborn to neighborhood Music Together classes for a number of months before recommending that I try the program with my own children. The concept of a private, stand-alone baby-toddler music class was novel to me, as this



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kind of enrichment had not existed when I was a child. To my surprise, Music Together not only hosted a generous number of baby-toddler music classes here in the Los Angeles area, but also had a presence in neighborhoods in many places around the world. Our first Music Together class was a success from the standpoint of my then one-year-old daughter, who quickly found herself laughing, dancing and listening intently while the animated teacher sang along to recordings of folk songs curated by musicologists at the Music Together headquarters in Princeton, New Jersey. Her favorite part was the free play at the end of the lesson, during which all the children grabbed instruments from a giant bucket and played them as loudly as they could to a folk tune that the teacher selected from the Music Together CD. The classes were not cheap, but I considered them a two-for-one, because while I sang, danced and tapped my hands to the beat alongside my daughter in class, my gestating son was listening in my womb. Or were they a three-for-one? Living the exhausting rhythm of daily life with a baby, I also found the classes a personal oasis, the one time a week when I could leave the house, relax a little, enjoy the music and let the teacher take the lead in providing enrichment to my child. A while later, thanking my best friend in Dallas for opening up our world to Music Together, she surprised me again by telling me that her little family had switched loyalties. The free play had been too noisy for her, so they were now big fans of their local Kindermusik class! After we completed the full nine-season song-cycle at Music Together, my family followed suit by trying out Kindermusik classes taught in Mandarin Chinese at a local music school.

The experiences that my best friend and I had with Music Together and Kindermusik are probably not uncommon among new parents of a similar education level living in quiet suburbs of large US cities today. What was more unusual was my assumption that we were receiving a Kodály-based baby-toddler music education. By some accounts, including the official narratives of Music Together and Kindermusik, my assumption was incorrect. In 2016, I was nearly fifteen years removed from my Kodály training at the Kodály Intézet [‘Zoltán Kodály Pedagogical Institute of Music’] in Kecskemét, so I had only a vague memory of Kodály’s encouragement that babies and toddlers receive a music education rich in folk songs, and I thought that Music Together and Kindermusik were it. Private baby-toddler music classes did not exist in Hungary when I studied at the Kodály Intézet from 2001 to 2002, as mandatory preschool music education there was strong. I had assumed that these private classes in the US were simply a different way of doing Kodály.

Fast-forward five years, after researching Kodály-based preschool music education, first systematized in Hungary in the 1950’s and 60’s by Kodály protégé, Katalin Forrai, and brought to the US by a number of distinguished female scholar-educators such as Katinka Dániel, Betsy Moll, and Lorna Zemke (Angela Chong 2022), I am clear now that the history of quality preschool music education in the US is a contested one. Those who first attempted to bring Kodály to US preschools in the 1970’s, were met with a lack of support from a US system that failed to prioritize preschool music. Meanwhile, private baby-toddler music programs like Music Together and Kindermusik sprang up in the 1970’s and 80’s and became popular and profitable in the 2000’s, giving direct credit to the work of American music researchers such as Edwin E. Gordon for their success. Those who are familiar with both worlds will notice the many ways in which Music Together and Kindermusik mirror the principles of Kodály, even though their program literature almost never mentions Kodály by name. This paper documents the histories of the very first private, stand-alone baby-toddler music classes in the US, including some of the most lucrative ones, Music Together and Kindermusik, as well as the founders and researchers

who were first involved, with special attention given to where Hungarian pedagogues may have influenced their development through the teachings of Zoltán Kodály.

The Hungarian Inspiration of US Early Childhood Music

As we learned in Part One, there is not much documented, formal early childhood music education in the US, but it would not be unreasonable to suggest that Hungary is the inspiration for much of what formal early childhood music education has existed. Many are aware of Kodály's history as a scholar, composer and public figure who, after composing his masterwork, *Psalmus Hungaricus* (1923), developed an interest in educating children to become creators and connoisseurs of high-quality Hungarian classical music (Ittész 2002: 33). From then on, Kodály composed children's choral music and adapted Hungarian folk music to children's music literature to further his education project, which he believed should begin at as early an age as possible (Ittész 2002: 34-5). In 1940-41, Kodály published his thoughts on preschool music education in *Zene az óvodában* ['Music in the Óvoda;'] *óvoda* refers to Hungary's mandatory publicly funded preschool for ages three to six]. Under Kodály's discipleship in the 1950's and 60's, Katalin Forrai developed a comprehensive early childhood pedagogy, which she articulated in depth in her classic books, *Ének az óvodában* ['Singing in the Óvoda,'] first published in Hungarian in 1974, translated into English in 1988 by Jean Sinor of Indiana University as *Music in Preschool* and including over one hundred rhymes and singing games of Anglo heritage to use in a US classroom] and *Ének a bölcsődében* ['Singing in the Bölcsőde;'] *bölcsőde* refers to Hungary's publicly funded crèche for children from birth to age three], first published in Hungarian in 1985. Her early childhood music education philosophy includes key elements such as developmentally appropriate curriculum design, use of quality folk music based in singing, as well as nursery rhymes and singing games from the children's mother tongue culture and an emphasis on nurturing the child's emotions, imagination and creativity through play (Beth Mattingly 2016: 112-3). Forrai is widely considered the founder of the field of early childhood music (Elizabeth Moll 2013; Mattingly 2016: 91).

From the 1960's until their deaths, Kodály and Forrai were actively involved in promoting the Kodály Concept and its early childhood emphasis to Americans in both Hungary and the US. When the sixth International Society for Music Education (ISME) conference was held in Budapest in 1964, Kodály and his protégés received their first opportunity to put Hungarian music education on display with demonstrations and lectures on the Kodály Concept for their foreign visitors, including some from the US (Mattingly 2016: 80). Forrai's demonstration on preschool music made quite a sensation, leading to many invitations to present research papers, lectures and workshops around the world (Mattingly 2016: 81). Upon their invitation to the seventh ISME conference held in Interlochen, Michigan in 1966, Kodály and his protégés, including Forrai, were given extremely unusual permission by the Hungarian government to travel to North America to promote the Hungarian musical approach (Mattingly 2016: 81-3). During this 1966 visit, Kodály et al also gave presentations at the University of Toronto, Stanford, Berkeley, University of California Santa Barbara and several other institutions addressing the growing North American interest in the Hungarian teaching method (Berlász 2017: 90). During this period, Kodály staunchly insisted on the integration of his music concept into standard public education, dismissing extra-curricular music instruction as elitist (Péteri 2022: 169). ISME remained an important venue through which Kodály's and Forrai's ideas on music in formal preschools and primary schools became well known in the music

education world, with Kodály serving as Honorary President from 1964 until 1967 (the year of his death) and Forrai serving in ISME leadership from 1976-92, including as founder of the ISME Early Childhood Commission in 1978 (Ittész 2004; Mattingly 2016: 86-9).

A US History of Private, Stand-Alone Baby-Toddler Music Classes

How, then, did the idea of private, stand-alone baby-toddler music classes come about? ["Stand-alone" in this context means not a part of a general preschool curriculum, but rather a music course offered on its own.] In the 1970's and 80's, American students of Forrai, such as Betsy Moll, tried to implement Kodály-based early childhood concepts into US preschools, but found the lack of institutional support for systematic US preschool music education to be prohibitive (Chong 2022). In 1984, perhaps in response to this unsupportive US preschool environment, American Kodály scholar Lorna Zemke founded a private, stand-alone baby-toddler music course called, "Music for Tots" (<https://slcnews.wordpress.com/2009/08/26/music-for-tots-classes/>). An early adaptor of Kodály in the US and one of the first Americans to study Kodály's pedagogy in Budapest in 1970, Zemke affectionately adheres to Kodály's foundational principles, including his belief that every child can be taught to sing beautifully using high-quality musical material based in their own folk heritage (Strong 2019). Zemke describes how she spent significant time with Forrai in 1970, observing her teach preschool children, listening to her lectures on early childhood music and asking her questions. This knowledge gained from Forrai served as the basis for Music for Tots (Mattingly 2016: 125)¹. The program has operated continuously for thirty-eight years in Northeast Wisconsin where Zemke continues her work. Once a week, parents attend classes with their babies and toddlers for ten-week sessions during which they play singing- and rhythm-games according to the recommendations of Kodály and Forrai (<https://www.hfconservatory.org/music-for-tots>; Kodály 1941; Forrai 1994; Forrai and Sinor 1998). Following the early childhood music principles developed over several decades in Hungary, Zemke's Music for Tots is likely one of the first private, stand-alone baby-toddler music classes in the US.

The founding of Zemke's Kodály-based Music for Tots in 1984 raises questions regarding the foundational narratives promoted by larger providers of baby-toddler music, including Music Together. In a promotional guidebook for parents and caregivers, Music Together highlights its "pioneer[ing]" role in offering a "research-based, developmentally appropriate early childhood music curriculum that strongly emphasizes and facilitates adult involvement" (Guilmartin and Levinowitz 2017: Introduction). Founded in 1985, a year after Zemke's Music for Tots, it does not appear to be remarkably different pedagogically, even though its promotional literature does not mention Kodály at all. Music Together's research focus and worldwide expansion are, however, two distinct features that appear to be selling points for well-educated parents with means, as they were for me and my best friend. Its Princeton Lab School pilots curriculum modifications, new programs, and research for Music

¹ Mattingly writes that Music for Tots began in 1971, immediately after Zemke returned from Hungary, but I believe this is a mistake, because Zemke returned to California in 1971 to complete her USC doctoral dissertation and continued teaching at the San Roque School in Santa Barbara (Chong 2022). On the Silver Lake College website, in a 2009 press release announcing the twenty-fifth anniversary of Music for Tots, Zemke states that the program began in 1984 (Silver Lake College website 2009).

Together Worldwide (<https://www.musictogetherprinceton.com/about-us.html>). Since its founding, Music Together has expanded, largely through a franchise model, to over three-thousand locations and forty countries (<https://www.musictogether.com>).

Under the narrative given by Music Together, its pedagogical similarity to Music for Tots must be a coincidence, as its pedagogy was built not out of tradition – American, Hungarian, or otherwise – but rather from the latest research studies. According to Susan Hoffman in her 2006 paper, "Music Together as a Research-based Program," Music Together co-founders Guilmartin and Levinowitz relied upon research in the fields of neuroscience, psychology and early childhood learning to support their four basic principles, which form the "cornerstones of Music Together's philosophy":

- All children are musical.
- All children can achieve basic music competence.
- The participation and modeling of parents and caregivers, regardless of their musical ability, is essential to a child's musical growth.
- This growth is best achieved in a playful, non-performance-oriented learning environment which is musically rich, yet immediately accessible to the child's – and the adult's – participation. (Hoffman 2006)

There is reason to question the idea that Music Together's pedagogy is derived entirely from research. Levinowitz first articulates the Music Together cornerstones in her 1998 paper published in *General Music Today* entitled, "The Importance of Music in Early Childhood" (Levinowitz 1998). The paper contains valuable research conclusions, but cites Guilmartin and Levinowitz's promotional guidebook for Music Together parents and caregivers, "Music and Your Child" (in its earlier editions published in 1989, 1992, and 1996), as a research source for the validity of a key child-developmental benchmark called, "basic music competence," even though the promotional guidebook gives no research citations (Guilmartin and Levinowitz 2017: 30-1). In addition, the majority of the research cited in Levinowitz's 1998 paper took place after Music Together's founding in 1985. While it is a positive attribute of Music Together to be continually enhancing its program based upon new research, the question remains of how Guilmartin and Levinowitz designed an initial pedagogical concept that was so similar to the Kodály-based model used earlier by Zemke's Music for Tots. One of the few pre-1985 citations in Levinowitz's 1998 paper is a curious one: "The Effects of Music Education Based on Kodaly's Directives in Nursery School Children from a Psychologist's Point of View." *Psychology of Music* [ISME IX Research Seminar], 1982." I looked through the 1982 editions of *Psychology of Music*, as well as 1981 and 1983 editions, but could not find this title, which may be miscited. If Levinowitz read this article, perhaps the Kodály-based nursery school program it describes (likely in a Hungarian *bölcsőde*) informed Music Together's initial pedagogy. It is also possible that Guilmartin and Levinowitz encountered Forrai at ISME or one of the many teacher trainings given by Forrai and her protégés across the US and abroad, starting from the late 1960's to beyond the time of Music Together's founding. Guilmartin and Levinowitz may have even encountered Zemke and her Music for Tots program while developing the concept of Music Together. The similarity between Music Together and Music for Tots may have been pure coincidence. More likely in the small world of early childhood music, Forrai's Kodály-based early childhood approach was well-known as a model of excellence by the 1980's when Music Together opened its doors.

Like Music Together, Kindermusik also claims to be the world-wide pioneer of research-based baby-toddler music programs. In addition, Kindermusik's narrative seems to put Kodály on the defensive about the uniqueness of his Hungarian early childhood approach, with founder Dan Pratt's "discovery" in the 1960's of a music curriculum for young children in Cologne, Germany as the basis for Kindermusik (<https://www.kindermusik.com/about/our-history>). This mysterious German early childhood curriculum is likely the *Curriculum Musikalische Früherziehung* ['early childhood music curriculum'], a two-year general music program for four- to six-year-old children that became well-accepted in West Germany by the early 1970's. This program was first published in 1968 by music pedagogue, Diethard Wucher, who also promoted the German concept of a youth music school in every neighborhood that would allow families to walk easily to and from and therefore participate together in music education. These neighborhood music schools continue to operate across Germany to this day, and the *Curriculum Musikalische Früherziehung* is the standard for all early childhood music curricula that have since been developed for these schools (Linkens 2015: 17-8). In Pratt's discovery story, full credit is not given to the German tradition, whose name and founder's name is never mentioned. Rather, the German origin story serves to reinforce Kindermusik's claim as the first baby-toddler music class in the US, started in 1978 before Music Together and Music for Tots. This story also challenges whether formal and systemic early childhood music education was exclusively a Hungarian idea.

Kodály and the German Tradition of Early Childhood Music

Is it possible, then, that both Music Together and Lorna Zemke's Kodály-based Music for Tots might have received foundational ideas from their predecessor, Kindermusik, and the German tradition in which it is grounded? We cannot recognize this possibility without first examining some details that complicate the founding story of Kindermusik and suggest that credit for the program's initial concept and pedagogy might go to another program, Musikgarten, and its founder, another Lorna: Lorna Lutz Heyge. Musikgarten is a baby-toddler music program started in Toronto in 1994 as a collaboration between music pedagogue Heyge and the Montessori expert Audrey Sillick. Musikgarten claims that Heyge is the true founder of Kindermusik, which she established in 1974 and no longer runs (<https://musikgarten.org/our-history>). Further information about Heyge is available in a book written by her Musikgarten protégé, Jean Ellen Linkens, entitled, *A Song from the Heart* (2015). This book was adapted for a popular audience from Linkens' 2012 dissertation on Heyge's pedagogical philosophy and gives a compelling counter-narrative to what is found on Kindermusik's website (Linkens 2015: 9).

Linkens gives full credit to the *Curriculum Musikalische Früherziehung* as Heyge's inspiration. A German-American musician, Heyge was born and raised in a small village in upstate New York. Through exceptional talent, she found her way to Cologne, Germany, first on a post-graduate scholarship from the Eastman School of Music, and later on a Fulbright that allowed her to receive an Artist Diploma in Organ and a Ph.D. in Musicology from the University of Cologne in 1968 (Linkens 2015: 12-5). After her Fulbright, she taught the organ at Greensboro College in Greensboro, North Carolina, then returned to Germany in 1971 to work for Wucher as assistant director of a youth music school in Troisdorf. Part of her job was to teach fundamental music courses to four- to six-year-olds using the *Curriculum Musikalische Früherziehung* (Linkens 2015: 15-7). In 1972, she partnered with Wucher on an English-language adaptation of the program, which she taught to English-speaking children in Bonn in 1973 as part of a larger research study that would inform the curriculum's revision in 1974

(Linkens 2015:18-9). Wucher then sent Heyge back to Greensboro to test the English-language adaptation in the very first North American classes in 1974. In 1978, Heyge married and moved to Toronto. That same year, the original German publisher, Bosse Verlag GbmH, published Heyge's first edition of her English translation of the *Curriculum Musikalische Früherziehung*, including culturally relevant substitutions of songs and illustrations, under the name *Kindermusik* ['children's music'] (Linkens 2015: 20-3).

This story told about Heyge is at odds with Pratt's discovery story, which includes his establishment of the first *Kindermusik* class in 1978. To continue Heyge's version: as a Wucher protégé, Heyge brought *Curriculum Musikalische Früherziehung* to North America with her first class in 1974, then led its expansion into what became known as *Kindermusik*. In 1993, after a disagreement with her business partners over *Kindermusik*'s trademark status, Heyge sold her rights and established a new program called Musikgarten in 1994 (Linkens 2015: 25-6; Musikgarten website 2022). Heyge claims that the original *Kindermusik* curriculum evolved into the current Musikgarten curriculum and bears no relationship to the curriculum called *Kindermusik* today (Linkens 2015: 23-7). Particularly strange is that Heyge's narrative, as told on the Musikgarten website and in Linkens' book, never mentions Pratt, nor do various *Kindermusik*-affiliated websites ever mention Heyge, even though many of the details in their lives suggest that they had similar experiences and lived in the same places. Both received a German Fulbright in Cologne; taught courses at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey; both *Kindermusik* and Musikgarten are headquartered in Greensboro, North Carolina; and Pratt apparently now lives in upstate New York where Heyge grew up. (Musikgarten website 2022; Linkens 2015; *Kindermusik* website 2022; North Macon Piano Studio website 2022; "Kindermusik's Founder Dan Pratt [video]" 2018). If we can trust a Greensboro newspaper article from 1994, the uncomfortable history seems to involve Heyge and Pratt as early partners, jointly expanding *Kindermusik* before a nasty fall-out and Heyge's departure in 1993 (Scism 1994).

The credibility of Heyge's version of *Kindermusik* history matters, because Heyge has acknowledged that her English-language adaptation of *Curriculum Musikalische Früherziehung* is heavily influenced by Kodály. Heyge confirms in a personal communication with Linkens that her pedagogy adopted Kodály's moveable-do solfège system, his sequence of teaching music to young children, and his emphasis on listening, singing, and moving to music before notation (Linkens 2015: 42). If the prototype *Kindermusik* course that Heyge claims to have established in Greensboro in 1974 in fact helped to shape the initial pedagogies of Music Together and Music for Tots, this may strengthen rather than weaken the argument that Kodály-based Hungarian early childhood music concepts were at the heart of the very first private, stand-alone baby-toddler music courses in the US. We can resist the premature assumption that a 1960's German early childhood music pedagogy brought to the US in the 1970's might rival the Kodály-based concepts that Forrai and her protégés were trying to institutionalize in the US at the same time because Heyge freely credits Kodály for a major part of her initial pedagogy.

Moreover, it appears that Kodály's teachings were already well integrated into the West German music education system by the time Wucher introduced the *Curriculum Musikalische Früherziehung* in 1968. Wucher's approach was likely partially, if not primarily, Kodály-based

(Linkens 2015: 41).² This is not a far-fetched conclusion because Kodály traveled frequently to West Germany to promote his Hungarian musical ideas. Leading Kodály scholar Anna Dalos writes that, "After 1959, [Kodály] acted as an envoy for Hungarian music, traveling regularly to Britain, Switzerland, West Germany, Israel, the Soviet Union, and in 1965 and 1966 to North America" (Dalos 2020: 15). By the time Wucher and Heyge began collaborating on *Kindermusik* in 1972, Kodály's ideas had already grown such a following in West Germany that Conrad Wilhelm Mayer established the German Kodály Society and published *Die musikpädagogische Konzeption Zoltán Kodálys: eine systematische Darstellung der Prinzipien* ['Zoltán Kodály's Concept of Music Pedagogy: A Systematic Presentation of the Principles'] to assist West German music educators in their Kodály instruction (Mayer 1972). In addition, many Hungarian-trained music educators, whether refugees or otherwise, established their residence in West Germany, including Weinstadt-based Hungarian music pedagogue, Fritz Kaminsky, who revitalized the German Kodály Society in 2011 (International Kodály Society website 2014). The evidence suggests that Kodály's teachings are one of the main inspirations for the original *Kindermusik* course, in whole or in part directly through the Kodály-based features of its German curriculum foundation, *Curriculum Musicalische Früherziehung*.

Kodály Soteriology and "Music and Movement" Research

It would seem at first glance to be antithetical to the light-hearted spirit of music for babies and toddlers that personal and ideological conflicts might frequently arise between early childhood music innovators, but passionate defense of territory begins to make sense in this field when we look at the project of quality preschool music as a perceived calling of national or even religious significance. This perspective may help us understand the disjointed autobiographical narratives told by US baby-toddler music programs as more than mere ego play. It is from this perspective that Hungarian musicologist Lórant Péteri writes about Kodály's own political and professional positions throughout various periods of Hungary's state socialism as a product of the almost-religious quality of his musical endeavors. Per a study by Hungarian sociologist Miklós Hadas, Péteri describes "the Kodály phenomenon in the framework of the sociology of religion, labelling Kodály, his pupils, and his doctrine as 'prophet,' 'sect,' and 'soteriology,' respectively," with "a clear ambition to exert influence on public policies" (Péteri 2021: 148-9, citing Hadas 1987). One of the main doctrinal positions (the soteriology) animating the prophet Kodály's life work was his rejection of elite Hungarian musical culture's German orientation, pervasive during his own youth, in favor of a form of nation-building designed to bring out the soul of the Hungarian people, which he believed was embodied best in authentic Hungarian folk

² According to Johns Hopkins musicologist Anicia Timberlake who researches the politics of music education in postwar East and West Germany, the Kodály concept was apparently not adopted by East German music pedagogues, who often made pedagogical choices based upon what was acceptable under Marxist ideology as well as what was considered German. Curiously, even though they used solfège hand signs nearly identical to the ones used by Kodály instructors, East German music teachers attributed their solfège lineage to Victorian England, not Hungary (Timberlake 2017: footnote 1).

music (Péteri 2021: 148).³ Among the “informal though centralized web of projects and personalities” making up the Kodály sect of nation-builders were the early childhood music educators who promoted Kodály’s vision through preschool music concepts systematized by Forrai (Péteri 2021: 149). Indeed, at the beginning of Sinor’s Forrai-translation, *Music in Preschool*, is the Kodály quotation: “To be concerned with the kindergarten (*óvoda*) and its music is not a minor pedagogical matter, but the very building of a nation” (Forrai, trans. Sinor 1988: title page, 15). Kodály early childhood music educators may have been among the most passionate adherents to Kodály’s so-called soteriology.

The quasi-religious nationalistic quality attached to Kodály-based teachings may have led firm adherents, most of whom had studied in Hungary and with Hungarians, to look with apprehension upon the German pedigree of Wucher, Heyge, and Kindermusik. We can look at the content of the respective Hungarian and German early childhood music approaches to illustrate how Heyge’s pedagogy, which she acknowledged was largely Kodály-based, might be seen as inadequate from a Kodály perspective. Linkens devotes an entire chapter of her book to all of Heyge’s pedagogical influences beyond Kodály, including the nineteenth-century German educational theorist, Friedrich Froebel. Heyge embraced Froebel’s ideas regarding the importance of teaching preschool children through playful activities, ideas which seem perfectly harmless (Linkens 2015: 33-4). Yet Forrai and Kodály treat Froebel as a major enemy of quality preschool music education. In Forrai’s recommendations on the selection of early childhood music repertoire, she criticizes Froebel’s use of songs to teach skills and concepts to young children, such as “how to behave; the reciting of numbers, letters, and colors; how to brush one’s teeth or comb,” as “purely didactic, not artistic,” or in Kodály’s words, “akin to aesthetic poison” (Forrai, trans. Sinor 1988: 15-6). Forrai further emphasizes her disgust that the tradition of using didactic songs with young children “persists strongly” (Forrai, trans. Sinor 1988: 16). Part of the widespread German influence in Hungarian musical culture that Kodály preached against, this Froebelian practice represents a fault line upon which Kodály-adherents might separate themselves with religious conviction. From a soteriological perspective, Kodály-adherents might reject early childhood music pedagogies that include prohibited approaches like Froebel’s because they are not Hungarian enough, even if they are primarily based upon Forrai’s sequencing and techniques.

A soteriological analysis of Kodály may help explain divisions among baby-toddler music approaches that began to appear in the US from the time Heyge established the possible first Kindermusik prototype in 1974. While there is no hard evidence of conflict with Heyge, it is well-known that Kodály-adherents excluded another American early childhood music founder, Mary Helen Richards, for what appears to be her positioning outside their soteriology. An adaptation of Kodály protégé Jenő Ádám’s first-grade primer, Richards’ classic text, *Threshold to Music*, was the first Kodály-based curriculum published in the US in 1964 (Richards 1964; Sheridan 2019: 61). Richards mentored directly with Kodály and even hosted him at her home in Portola Valley, California during his 1966 visit to the US, but after Kodály’s death in 1967 was

³ For a thorough background on Kodály’s position in relation to the historical German orientation of Hungarian music, see further Chapter 2 of the late Kodály Intézet archivist Mihály Ittész’s published doctoral dissertation entitled, *Zoltán Kodály, in Retrospect* (2002).

excluded from Kodály circles, because her *Threshold* publication and evolving approach did not include sufficient preparation and practice exercises nor an appropriate song collection (Todnem-Wendroth 2009: 30-5; Bonnin 2003: 26-8). Originally calling her approach the Kodály-Richards Approach, Richards stopped teaching Kodály and dropped Kodály from the names of her publications after a 1969 disagreement with the administrators of the Kodály summer course at Holy Names University regarding Richards' desire to use music to teach children broader skill-sets than what Kodály had approved (Todnem-Wendroth 2009: 37-8). Richards founded her own music education approach with an early childhood music component called MusicPlay, established in 1984 by her protégé, Peggy Bennett, at Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio (https://www2.oberlin.edu/library/digital/songworks/music_class.html); personal communication with Jody Kerchner, Oberlin Professor of Music Education, on 21 February 2022). MusicPlay is one example of a baby-toddler program grounded in Kodály, but not promoted as Kodály-based, perhaps because its founder was excluded from the Kodály sect. Richards was finally recognized by the Organization of American Kodály Educators (OAKE) in 1987 for her dedication to music and children, and she wrote that she was "thrilled, surprised and pleased to have been recognized as one of Kodály's many children!" (Richards 2007: 207, as cited in Todnem-Wendroth 2009: 64).

An example of a Kodály-trained founder embraced by the Kodály establishment who has distanced his approach from Kodály is John Feierabend, author of *Conversational Solfège* (2001) and its early childhood companion, *First Steps in Music* (2006). As a new college graduate in the early 1970's, Feierabend met Kodály protégé Katinka Dániel at one of her Kodály trainings at the National Music Camp in Interlochen, Michigan. Dániel recalls the following:

We were ready to leave when John came and said, 'Mrs. Daniel, I just got my bachelor's degree in education and next week I have to start teaching in public school. What do I teach?' I said, 'Sit down.' So we sat on the steps of the dormitory, and I dictated for him the teaching sequence. And then I told him, 'Next year when you come here, take all my two months classes in Interlochen.' Then after class was over I said, 'John, you are a talented boy. You don't go back to that elementary school. You go to Manitowoc and make your master's degree with Sister Loma.' That's what he did. Then we sent him to Temple University. He made his doctorate, and now he is a professor in Hartford (K. S. Daniel, personal interview, March 16, 1999, as cited in Bonnin 2013: 55-6)

Katinka Dániel, often referred to as the "Founding Mother" of the Kodály Concept in the US, took Feierabend in, so to speak, and, with the help of Lorna Zemke, raised him in the Kodály tradition. Feierabend maintains relationships within the Kodály establishment, for example, chairing and teaching the Kodály Certificate Summer Program at Lakeland University in Plymouth, Wisconsin, where Zemke used to teach. In his writing, he often references Kodály, such as in his article, "Developing Music Literacy with Conversational Solfege: An Aural Approach for an Aural Art," which contains eleven footnotes, nine of which are quotations from Kodály's various writings (Feierabend 1997). Yet, in 2012, he was intimately involved in founding the Feierabend Association for Music Education (FAME) whose objective is to promote "the Feierabend philosophy of music education" with no reference to Kodály (<https://www.feierabendmusic.org/about/>).

Feierabend's lack of attribution might at first glance be interpreted as yet another American like Pratt trying to misappropriate a generation of European tradition. But Sheridan offers one explanation for Feierabend's break from Kodály through his decision to present young

children first with the *mi-re-do* sequence quite common in American folk music, before the *sol-mi* sequence that characterizes the pentatonic folk music from Hungary (Sheridan 2019: 69). Ittzés writes, however, that Kodály would have approved of this minor modification based upon careful analysis of a nation's own musical mother tongue (Ittzés 2002: 262-3). Just as a soteriological framework might help make sense of the fervor and exclusivity with which Kodály sectarians pursued Kodály's music education vision, there may be yet another soteriology that explains why American baby-toddler music approaches might choose not to acknowledge their Kodály origins.

Heavy emphasis upon child-developmental research in North American baby-toddler programs points to a soteriology that challenges the Hungarian Kodály-based one. One of the prophets of this North American movement is music education researcher Edwin E. Gordon, who founded the Gordon Music Learning Theory. Gordon is a legendary figure in the psychology of early childhood music who, in his later years at Temple University (1979-1997), began exploring music development with infants and toddlers. From his research, he developed a Music Learning Theory defining stages of music aptitudes, including what he termed "audiation," the ability to think and understand music in one's mind (<https://giml.org/aboutgiml/gordon/>). This North American soteriology distinguishes itself from Kodály's in that the evolving literature of child-developmental research, as opposed to one particular set of pedagogical beliefs, defines and refines its approach.

Many of the previously described founders of the private, stand-alone baby-toddler music programs would fit neatly into this North American sect. While reluctant to call themselves Kodály-based, Music Together and Feierabend's First Steps in Music readily credit Gordon as an important contributor to their research-based baby-toddler approaches. This is not surprising because both Feierabend and Music Together's Lili Levinowitz mentored with Gordon as Ph.D. students at Temple University. Lorna Heyge did not study with Gordon, but she became a key promoter of this North American soteriology by gathering teachers and researchers in early childhood music together, first through her Kindermusik Teachers Association (KTA) formed in 1984, which later became the Early Childhood Music Association (ECMA) in 1994. (As of 1998, this organization is currently called the Early Childhood Music and Movement Association (ECMMA). During KTA's existence, Heyge's own pedagogical philosophy (called Kindermusik at the time) was the focus of discussion. The evolution of KTA into ECMA and then ECMMA purportedly opened the discussion to all early childhood music and movement teachers and philosophies to reflect upon the field in general (Linkens 2015: 62-3). Guilmartin and Levinowitz, Feierabend, and Heyge fall within the sect of early childhood music founders and researchers representing this child-developmental soteriology.

There is reason to believe that Heyge intended to exclude Kodály educators from this North American child-developmental movement based upon her leadership of ECMMA's journal. In 1995, Heyge started a professional journal called *Early Childhood Connections* to bring together "definitive thinkers at the forefront of educational theory, research and practice whose early childhood music and movement experiences are based on actual work with children" (Heyge 1995). The journal's inaugural Editorial Advisory Board contained a long list of celebrated North American researchers, including John Feierabend and Edwin E. Gordon. Heyge listed some members of the Editorial Advisory Board as experts in a particular approach such as Orff or Dalcroze, but none of the fifteen selected were recognized as Kodály experts. It would seem that Feierabend had chosen by that point to disassociate himself from the Kodály establishment, favoring instead the moniker "music and movement" as reflected in ECMMA. In

1987, he named his baby-toddler research center at The Hartt School, University of Hartford, "the National Center for Music and Movement in the Early Years." He has continued to be known as "one of the leading authorities on music and movement development in childhood" (FAME website 2019). Heyge considered Feierabend to be a "main player" in the field, along with Music Together's Ken Guilmartin, and "obviously" Gordon, all of whom she as editor invited on a regular basis to contribute to the journal (Linkens 2015: 65). The acultural and ahistorical nature of this "music and movement" soteriology, with its emphasis on the evolving body of child-developmental research about toddlers and music, might lead one to believe that this is a soteriology about trusting science rather than a cultural tradition, about being open and objective, even though it was formed with a clear North American bias and arguably a bias against the Kodály approach.

Profits and Artistry in US Baby-Toddler Music

A pragmatist might ask whether defining the field in terms of contested soteriology is helpful, when it appears that all the founders and experts in baby-toddler music (Kodály-based and otherwise) commonly hold as true certain fundamental principles first articulated by Kodály and Forrai, such as a belief that every child can sing beautifully, that music education should begin as early as possible, that musical material should include high-quality folk music in a child's mother tongue and that joyful singing and rhythm games are the most developmentally appropriate for this age. One response to the refrain, "Can't we all just get along?," is that looking at the history of differences among the players in their passionately held beliefs helps us question the assumptions and goals behind baby-toddler programs to ensure that they are meeting salvific aims that align with our own.

For example, I recognize now that I was not entirely clear about my aims for my own children during the four years before COVID-19 when we attended baby-toddler music classes. When we first started Music Together, my wise and frugal husband, balking at the tuition, would often ask, "What kind of research studies show that this class actually works?" In response, I would refer him to Music Together's promotional guidebook, "Music and Your Child," with its child-developmental theories lacking citations (Guilmartin and Levinowitz 2017). My husband's question turns out to be revelatory because there is an argument to be made that the skills that we pay these private, stand-alone baby-toddler programs to generate in our young children – the physical, cognitive, social and emotional ones that the research is designed to validate – are valued primarily to further our children's individual leverage in a market-based economy, to the detriment of Kodály's grander goals of nation-building and soul-enhancement that are more difficult to quantify and value.

A quick look at the 2021/2022 revenues of Kindermusik and Music Together may open our eyes to just how intertwined these programs are with profit-making goals. Growjo.com reported forty-four million two-hundred thousand dollars (\$44,200,000) of **annual** revenue for Kindermusik International, Inc. with two-hundred twenty-three (223) employees, and Zoominfo.com reported four billion dollars (\$4,000,000,000) of **quarterly** revenue for Music Together LLC with over twenty-four thousand (24,000) employees (the equivalent of over three times Kindermusik's revenue per employee). This sum does not even include revenues earned by individual franchisees. Beyond the fun that my daughter was having in Music Together, singing, dancing and noise-making during free-play, and my Mommy-relaxation time tapping and bouncing my gestating son, perhaps I was subconsciously also buying into the North American child-developmental soteriology and its scientific-objective framework for justifying our tuition

in terms of marketable skills my children would develop through the early enhancement of their brains. Now in retrospect, I see how this soteriology entices us to pay high prices for private baby-toddler music instruction that may be completely detached from Kodály's original vision that all children participate at no cost in the communal creation of artistic beauty through song.⁴

Considering the astonishing profits of Kindermusik and Music Together, it is no wonder, then, that private, stand-alone baby-toddler courses have exploded in popularity. According to one *Forbes* analyst, the children's activity industry is one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy, with high rates of franchising correlated with an increase in two-income households (Fiona Simpson 2018). Mark Rasche, leader of the Children's Activities Association, describes in his 2020 annual report how the sector is new, with the oldest businesses starting around 20 years ago; most businesses at less than ten years old; a great proportion less than five years old; and new businesses appearing every year (Rasche 2020). These descriptions roughly match up with the growth history of Kindermusik, which in 1993 received venture capital from twenty-five wealthy investors who saw its potential for exponential expansion. In 1994, right after Heyge left, Kindermusik had seventeen full-time employees and an annual revenue of two million dollars (Scism 1994). In 1997, its staff nearly doubled to thirty full-time and six part-time employees (McLaughlin 1997). After the industry explosion in the 2000's, Kindermusik's current two hundred-twenty-three employees and over forty-four million-dollar (\$44,000,000) annual revenue cement its reputation as a poster-child of rapid growth.

The underlying profit-making goals of the North American soteriology help explain why private baby-toddler music classes are becoming popular even in Germany and Hungary. I was perplexed at first to learn that Musikgarten expanded its private classes into Germany where I had thought that the publicly funded neighborhood schools already provided quality music classes to babies and toddlers based in the same tradition. Likewise, it surprised me to see that there is now a Music Together Duna Kids located in Budapest, where public funds already support free Kodály-based music education in the *bölcsőde* and *óvoda*. Seen in light of their research-based goals, these private classes may be offering a very different promise from the public ones – a promise of financial rewards for both provider and student, based in the capitalistic model of baby-toddler music that they are exporting to Germany and Hungary. I have followed up my husband's question with another: "What are these classes working to achieve?" Under the guise of neutral research findings, the "music and movement" soteriology may be subverting the noble goals of baby-toddler music originally articulated under Forrai's Kodály-based vision into ones that are designed to appeal to parents who have the means to afford private, stand-alone classes and want their children to grow up having the same means.

⁴ I thank Steven Jobbitt for the idea that US baby-toddler music might serve primarily to give children individual leverage in a market-based economy, in contrast with Kodály/Forrai's stated goals of nation-building and soul-enhancement for early childhood music education. I thank Beatriz Ilari for drawing a connection here with "concerted cultivation," a term used by sociologist Annette Lareau to describe a style of middle-class parenting aligned with enriching children's lives starting in early childhood. Dr. Ilari has also pointed out the relevance of "methodolatry," a term by which philosopher of music, Thomas Regelski, describes blind faith in technical methods for music instruction, without examining the methods' underlying social ethics. These suggestions reinforce the need for more research in the sociology and philosophy of baby-toddler music to help us better evaluate parents' motivations, as well as those of the various programs and methods we select, including Kodály's.

There is nothing wrong with a good baby-toddler program making well-deserved profits, nor are the research findings that reinforce these profits, in and of themselves, antithetical to Kodály's vision. For example, Zemke's Music for Tots lists verbal, socialization and musical skills as benefits of the class while maintaining that "[a]bove all, music enriches the lives of these children for a lifetime" (Music for Tots website 2022). In its promotional flyer, Sing, Play, Move!, a private, stand-alone baby-toddler course offered by the Kodály Center at Holy Names University, gives special emphasis to six research-based categories of child-developmental skill sets reinforced by the class (Sing, Play, Move! flyer 2021). Yet it is telling that Music for Tots classes cost less than half the price of Music Together or Kindermusik classes at nine dollars per class versus twenty to thirty dollars, while Sing, Play, Move! continues to postpone their classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, instead offering free monthly virtual sing-a-longs.

It is possible that the intuition and fervor with which Kodály and Forrai insisted upon certain pedagogical tenets – such as their hard line against use of Froebelian didactic songs in the preschool classroom, regardless of whether research might support them – reflect an understanding of truth that cannot be derived from scientific research, but rather from the lived experience of dehumanization by repressive regimes in Hungary using children's education (and specifically music education) as an avenue for indoctrination and subordination. Words written by Forrai capture how it is impossible to fully describe, measure, or put a price upon nurturing young children's artistry: "Artistry is not a function of the complexity of the melody or of the pedagogical point made by the text, but of the sheer joy and delight of sounds, movements, and words. True art does not do anything; it simply is, and by its very existence enhances our own" (Forrai, trans. by Sinor 1998: 16).

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