

## Music and Movement



# Hitting the right notes

**KINDERMUSIK SAYS** a good grounding in music can tick lots of development boxes for children and if you've got the right type of environment, it could bring new customers into your centre

Kindermusik was founded in 1978 in the USA based on a German early childhood music and movement program, and in the 35 years since, educators worldwide have trusted the proven brand to provide quality music and movement education to children newborn to age seven.

Established in the UK & Ireland since 2004, Kindermusik says that through music, children can expand their cognitive universe as they first experience - and later learn to produce - sounds organised to carry musical meaning within their culture.

Music is proven to expand memory and assist in developing crucial language skills. It exerts a multiplier effect on reasoning skills, especially on spatial reasoning - an effect that has been demonstrated experimentally. Music also reinforces such logical and perceptual ideas as beginning and ending, cause

and effect, sequence and balance, harmony and dissonance, as well as arithmetic concepts such as number, enumeration, and timing.

The music and movement programme is underpinned in the UK & Ireland by a network of 130 educators. Kindermusik educators don't have a set territory, nor are they franchisees.

Anita Thomas is one of those UK educators and came to the role having grown up in a Hungarian education system that put huge value in music. "In Hungary, every child was taught music until they were 17, particularly those in grammar school" she says. "The system is based on the principles of Zoltán Kodály, who is internationally renowned for creating the Kodály Method and, along with Suzuki, Calcroze and Orff, he is also one of the key inspirations behind the Kindermusik ethos.

"It's about understanding notes, rhythms and beats. Rather than sitting in a circle and listening to Baa Baa Black Sheep, then repeating it, you're giving children a deeper understanding of what lies behind the music," she says.

"Before any baby is born, they are in the womb, listening to mummy's heartbeat; so when they come out, they naturally search for things that give them the same comfort. We try to relate our activities to that in as sensory a way as possible, by letting the child not only hear the beat, but also see and feel the beat.

"Teaching things like staccato and legato (sharp and smooth) beats and linking that to movement has a big impact on young children and we develop every theme at the speed that they develop. By teaching familiar lessons, but with different activities, we allow children to explore their own musicality - they are not just doing what we tell them to do.

"The classes are really well structured. Each thematic unit contains 30-45 minute lessons that combine storytelling, activities and expressive interaction to promote skills such as active listening, vocabulary development, self-regulation, successful transitions and more. The programmes last for four weeks before we move onto the next theme and as the child gets older, the same themes are

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repeated at different stages.”

Kindermusik educators are spread the length and breadth of the UK and encourage as much adult interaction with their classes as possible. “People are used to something different, but this really offers adults a way to better understand how and what their child is learning. We believe at Kindermusik that parents are the main educators of children, and by drawing the attention to how a given activity actually impacts on the children, we enable parents to be more conscious about their parenting. As a parent myself, it has been really important to me to share why we do certain activities,” says Anita.

The classes have already been implemented successfully at Mini’s Playcentre in Preston. These classes are run by a local Kindermusik educator, Sharon Hersee. Any other indoor-play centre operator who believes Kindermusik can add something new to their centre can contact their local educator through the website address at the end of the article.

“It works well in an indoor-play centre if there is a separate room provided, and children do not go in and out during the class,” Anita says. “If the room is not enclosed, children can be tempted to go in and out during the activities. In a Kindermusik class, we also stipulate that until age 3-4, parents need to be there and be part of the activities.”

Kindermusik educators set their own class schedule and meet their own income goals. Their classes benefit from high quality teaching materials and instruments and the depth of research learnings built into the programme. And parents, childminders or nannies who attend the classes take home the songs and activities of the given theme through online home materials, to complete a diverse learning experience that stands out against the competition.

“The beauty of being able to take songs and activities home is that parents or home carers can either continue on with the lesson they were involved in or take part with the child at home if they



weren’t able to be at the lesson,” says Anita. “So a childminder could be at the lesson, but the parent can feel more involved by joining in at home, in the car, on a train or wherever,” says Anita. “The effect of familiarity is amazing. Repetition helps to build skills and once you’ve started, you can’t stop. Singing and dancing becomes part of your life and you’ll have happier children because of it.

“The level of engagement of the parents or carers is vital to the effectiveness of the lessons,” she adds. “If the child can sense that you’re disinterested or not willing to engage, then it’s far less likely that they will get

the full benefit.”

Mum Anita is confined to carrying out classes in her own area, but would love to see Kindermusik playing to the masses. “The more people who are doing it the better for me,” she says. “We want to reach out to as many families as possible. Quality music lasts and people from all walks of life will want to get involved.

“Even if a child doesn’t continue on to learn a musical instrument, Kindermusik gives them a great foundation for learning and a love of music for their whole life.”

[www.kindermusik.co.uk/Classes/classesfind.asp](http://www.kindermusik.co.uk/Classes/classesfind.asp)