



The Parents Who Get It

A reflection on what makes the families in my music classes genuinely unusual

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There is a particular kind of parent who brings their child to my music classes. They are, in the best possible sense, unusual.

That might sound like a strange thing to say. Music classes for young children are not exactly rare. At any given moment, in any given town, there is probably a brightly lit hall somewhere offering singing, dancing, tambourines, and a great deal of enthusiastic noise. And those classes have their place. But what the parents in my classes have chosen is something rather different — and it is worth pausing to reflect on what that says about them.

The easy choice, and the other one

Most parents approaching early music education face a fairly straightforward menu. On one side: the lively, sociable, let's-all-wiggle-and-sing sessions designed for very young children — fun, accessible, and centred on the experience of the moment. On the other: direct instrumental lessons, perhaps piano or violin, where a child begins to learn a specific skill on a specific instrument.

Both are perfectly valid. But there is a third path, one that fewer parents think to look for — and fewer still actively seek out. It is the path of *musical understanding*: teaching children, from the very beginning, how music actually works. Not just to enjoy it (though enjoyment is very much part of it), but to internalise it. To feel the pulse in their bodies. To hear whether a melody is rising or falling. To carry a tune confidently, not because they have been drilled, but because their ear has been trained to listen. This is the path of Kodály and Dalcroze — two of the most rigorously researched and deeply respected approaches to early musical development in the world.

This is what the parents in my classes have chosen. And it matters, because it is not the obvious choice.

What you are not choosing

We live in an age of visible outcomes. Parents are surrounded by invitations to watch their children perform — in shows, concerts, recitals, and end-of-term productions. Musical theatre groups, rock schools, and stage academies offer something very tangible: a child goes in, a performer comes out. There are costumes, microphones, lights, and social media moments. The “progress” is easy to photograph.

I fully understand the appeal. There is nothing wrong with any of it, and children can thrive in those settings. But the parents in my classes have made a different calculation. They have looked at the flashy packaging and asked a quiet, rather searching question: *but is my child actually learning music?*

Invisible progress

Here is the honest truth about what I teach, and why it requires a particular kind of faith from parents.

A child who has spent a term learning to feel a steady beat in their body, to match a pitch with their voice, to distinguish between a song in two and a song in three — that child may look, to the untrained eye, much the same as before. There is no certificate. No costume. No YouTube moment. The progress is *internal*, and internal progress is, by definition, harder to show grandparents.

But it is the most important kind. Because what that child is building is a foundation — one that will underpin everything else they ever do in music. When they pick up an instrument, they will already know how music moves. When they encounter a melody, they will be able to hear it, not just reproduce it mechanically. When they sing, they will sing in tune — not because they are talented, but because their ear has been patiently, carefully developed.

This is music learnt the right way round. Not thrown at children in the hope that something sticks, but built step by careful step, in a sequence that mirrors how children actually learn. The parents who choose this are choosing depth over display. Understanding over showiness. They are playing a long game — and the long game, in music education, is the one worth playing.

Fun towards a purpose

I should say clearly: my classes *are* fun. There is movement, laughter, singing, games, and a great deal of energy. Young children do not sit still, and they should not have to. But the fun in my classes is fun *with direction* — every activity is carefully chosen to develop a specific musical capacity, even when it looks like nothing more than a game.

This is perhaps the most sophisticated thing the parents in my classes understand: that rigour and joy are not opposites. That a class can be genuinely playful and also genuinely serious about music. That the two, in fact, go together rather beautifully.

The wider picture

None of this is to say that musical theatre, instrumental lessons, or any other musical activity is somehow lesser. On the contrary. A child who has spent time in my classes — with their pulse secure, their ear trained, their musical instincts developed — will bring *more* to those other pursuits, not less. The Kodály-trained child who goes on to learn the violin already knows how music feels before the bow touches the string. The child with embodied rhythm who joins a theatre group already has something in their body that no amount of stage school can manufacture.

The foundation makes everything else stronger. That is rather the point.

A final thought

The parents who bring their children to my classes week after week — not for a showy end-of-term performance, but because they believe in the value of what is being quietly, steadily built — are doing something that deserves to be recognised. They are making an unusual choice. A thoughtful choice. A choice that their children will, in time, thank them for.

It is a genuine pleasure to teach children whose parents understand this. And I look forward to continuing that work together.