

'The Magic in the Method Book' Notes

Karen Kyriakou July 2025

DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS, THE NOTATED MUSIC HAS NOT BEEN PROVIDED IN THESE HANDOUTS

Method books:

Structured & Scaffolded learning

Designed to provide a structured approach from set up, technique, exercises and repertoire.

Content

Often mix of technical, rudiments/exercises, folk, classical, traditional and newly purpose-composed pieces, fingering charts, images of instrument and body position set up. Sometimes test pieces. Often one concept at a time is addressed with several pieces supporting the new content.

Series

Often a series, (e.g. book 1, 2, 3, etc), taking student from beginner to advanced.

Instructor/Teacher necessary

Although the content is structured, the expert knowledge of the teacher is required to navigate the learning and correct errors until the student can learn to self-correct. These books are not designed to be used without a teacher.



If we include improvisation and 'making things up' from the start, students learn that this is a normal part of playing an instrument and developing music-making skills.

Who amongst us is relieved they can't improvise?

Teaching students that they have permission to explore the music 'off the page', especially for folk and traditional pieces, is a great way to start students developing their self expression.

Example 1

Old MacDonald

Essential Elements

Page 14 No.42

This piece is placed at the beginning of the book, designed to be played pizzicato.

Once bowing has been established, re-visit these pieces (build on what is already known) and use the pieces in a playful way.

1. Learn/revise the piece
2. Divide class into two groups (can be done by instrument group or any other way).
3. Group 1 plays the melody, Group 2 is the 'animal/sound'.
4. One person is selected from Group 2 to decide what sound will be played and copied. All the other members of that group will copy back on the second line.

Form:

- Group 1 plays line 1 with the repeat but stops on the 3rd beat of the 2nd bar (2x)
- The person selected from Group 2 plays a short sound or a rhythm (no more than 4 beats)
- Group 1 completes line 1 (second time)
- Group 2 imitates the sound/rhythm 4 times (B section of AABA)
- Group 1 plays the final line (with the upbeat from line three).
- Swap groups and select a new 'leader'

Example 2

Old Joe Clarke

Sound Innovations

Page 33 No. 132

This piece already has the publishers/authors notes to improvise and play variations on this folk theme. For students to know how to improvise in 'style' they firstly need to hear the style. Play some examples and then give parameters:

- change a crotchet to two quavers
- break up a long note by changing the rhythm
- add a 'slide'

What else can be changed?



In order to offer a holistic and inclusive curriculum to students, content ideally should be delivered in numerous ways. This gives all learners the best chance of better understanding new concepts and absorbing information.

Below is a reading game with two examples for different levels of difficulty to play with students to help reinforce and identify notes.

Part 1

Duke of York

Tricks to Tunes

Page 31

1. Learn the piece.
2. Divide the class into 4 groups - this could be done by instrument or any other way. Assign a different note of the piece to each group e.g.; Violins-D, Violas-E, Cello-F#, Bass-G or Player 1-D, Player 2 E etc.
3. Play the piece. Each group/player group can only play their allocated note. The idea is that they are tracking the music (eyes left to right) and identifying 'their' note, reinforcing note names, identifying a notes' position on the stave, and practicing starting and stopping at the correct time.

This isn't necessarily the most musical of outcomes, but it is quite fun! Swap the groups and notes around so that students don't get too comfortable! Students enjoy the activity and the repetition is enormously valuable.

Part 2

Mary Had a Little Lamb

Tricks to Tunes

Page 35

The same activity as above, but this time the notes vary more!

Students, although likely familiar with the tune, have to use their reflexes to keep up with the moving notes in the piece. Once familiar with the activity, you might like to try with a metronome so that the piece moves along, especially in bars with notes changing on every beat!

AURAL

This activity helps students make connections between sound and symbol, and helps to reinforce the concept of melodic shape. Aural is often taught away from printed music, but many students require (or can benefit from) the visual support.

1. Select a piece of music that the students are playing.
2. Play a bar of phrase of the piece to the students.
3. Students need to identify/find what bar/phrase was played.

Examples used:

Suogan

Flying Start for Strings

Page 28

Cool Moves

Music Maestros

Page 39

Melody Exercises

A Tune A Day

Page 13

ARRANGING & COMPOSITION

The skill of arranging can be taught at all levels of playing - it is a great way for students to use their creativity and their learned instrumental skills while developing confidence (and intuition) on an instrument. Tell students to trust their ears and have a go!*

*Teachers too!

Repetition is a necessary way for students to learn. Arranging the music provides a platform for repetition, creativity, delving deeper into the music, exploring harmony, patterns, memory work, team work and more!

Practice requires repetitions.

Arranging can provide many repetitions while keeping the piece interesting.

Example 1

Czech Folk Song

Strictly Strings

Page 36, No.5

This piece uses *spiccato* as the new teaching concept.

Ask students for suggestions on how to arrange this piece - aim for a substantial arrangement; maybe an introduction, harmonies, texture... see what the class can come up with!

Ideas:

- D pizz pattern for introduction. Repeated several times, build to a climax!
- Tutti on bars 1 and 2, and 5 and 6
First time line 1 - upper strings play bars 2 and 3, and 7 and 8.
Second time line 1 - lower strings play bars 2 and 3, and 7 and 8.
Lower string play line 2 bars 1 and 2 (f) upper strings play the next two bars 9 (p)
Tutti last two bars.
- Harmony last 4 bars - who can work one out?
- Share ideas for arranging with the class.
- Who plays first, who plays next...
- Will there be a drone or other harmonies?

Can the students remember the arrangement without writing it down?

Example 2

Theme from Symphony No.1 - Mahler

String Basics

Page 32, No.156

This is such a great movement and students can and should listen to it (that clarinet!!). To arrange this piece see how many layers of ostinatos/ostinati the class can create while still keeping the melodic line balanced.