



STEPPING STONES:

An Ecumenical Children's Choir Curriculum

Early Childhood Level, Year 1

(Pre School Age)

by

Ronald A. Nelson

Edited by C. Michael Hawn

Also available:

Early Childhood / Preschool Listening CD, Year 1 (code CGCD20)

Purchase of this CD includes permission to duplicate for each child.

Copyright © 1995 Choristers Guild. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.
Reproduction in any portion or form is prohibited without publisher's permission.

Preface

What is *Stepping Stones*? *Stepping Stones* is a music education curriculum for the church. Like any curriculum, it reflects certain priorities. The following are the goals of *Stepping Stones*:

- Each child will learn to sing accurately
- Each child will develop her/his singing voice for use in worship within an age-appropriate context
- Each child will learn to read musical notation
- Each child will learn hymns within the ecumenical repertoire
- Each child will experience the general seasons of the Christian year within the context of music

In order to meet these goals, *Stepping Stones* is influenced by the music education philosophy of the eminent twentieth century composer and music educator Zoltan Kodály. The teacher can see this influence in *Stepping Stones* in several ways:

- Use of a general sequencing of melodic and rhythmic concepts throughout the year based on Kodály's methodology
- Use of a system of *solfege* supported by hand signs that reinforce visually and kinesthetically melodic movement
- Use of a system of rhythm syllables for reinforcing rhythmic learning
- Use of folk song material, much of which is based on the pentatonic (five-note) scale
- Use of children's singing games

Stepping Stones is designed to be a church music education component within a choir session. The curriculum is in a three-year sequence. Year I includes the following:

Early Childhood Level I written by **Ronald A. Nelson**, retired Director of Music at Westwood Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, editor of the *Alleluia Curriculum* published by Augsburg, and noted composer and clinician.

Early Elementary Level I written by **Betty Bedsole**, Professor of Music Education at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, a Kodály specialist, author of children's choir texts, and noted clinician throughout the United States.

4 STEPPING STONES

Each level will include a teacher's book and a cassette tape designed to reinforce the children's learning beyond the rehearsals through listening. Additional teaching aids including rhythm and melodic cards and hand sign charts are also available through Choristers Guild.

Stepping Stones is designed for those who wish to integrate sequential musical education into their rehearsals. Anthems are suggested for the older levels, but the curriculum is not anthem based. Given the broad ecumenical spectrum of the membership of Choristers Guild, teachers may develop musical and vocal skills and still choose anthems that fit their particular worship needs. The curriculum has been field tested by nearly 100 churches drawn from a wide variety of denominations and worship traditions. Teachers during the field testing process range from those with a minimum of musical training to those with graduate degrees. Choristers Guild is grateful to the many members who have responded to the call for field testing. Their input has improved the final result.

What does the teacher need to know to use *Stepping Stones*?

The advantage of using *Stepping Stones* is that the teacher becomes a better musician as they prepare for the sessions. The skills emphasized in the Kodály methodology not only improve the ability of the child to sing and to read music, but provide the teacher with a solid framework for structuring the rehearsal for most effective use of time. Teachers often find that their skills improve as they teach the children to sing and read music. In addition to preparing for the sessions, teachers will benefit by attending specific training events sponsored by Choristers Guild or other workshops focusing on Kodály methodology. The use of ecumenical hymns and a context of the Christian year make *Stepping Stones* accessible for all denominations.

It is our hope that *Stepping Stones* will not only help you plan your weekly rehearsals more effectively, but also will assist you in providing a life-long skill of singing and reading music, enriching their ability to sing in choirs and participate in worship.

Enjoy *Stepping Stones*!

C. Michael Hawn, Editor and Project Coordinator

Contents

Introduction	7
Session 1	10
Hymn Chart	13
Session 2	14
Session 3	16
Session 4	18
Session 5	20
Session 6	22
Session 7	24
Session 8	26
Session 9	28
Session 10	30
Session 11	32
Session 12	33
Mid-year Musings	34
Session 13	36
Session 14	38
Session 15	40
Session 16	42
Session 17	44
Session 18	46
Session 19	48
Session 20	50
Session 21	52
Session 22	54
Session 23	56
Session 24	58
Session 25	60
Session 26	61
Index of Songs, Activities and Vocalizes	63

STEPPING STONES: Early Childhood Level

INTRODUCTION

What a magical time, these pre- and beginning school years! Never again will a child be as open and thirsty for learning!

For 3's and 4's, therefore, this is a time of *exploration* and *discovery*:

- ♪ of their voices
- ♪ of their bodies and natural rhythms they can make with them
- ♪ of that pulse called the "beat"
- ♪ of other musical concepts and music "reading readiness"
- ♪ of earliest song repertoire.

If these "discoveries" are carefully but enthusiastically pursued in the first two years, the *fruits* will be evident in Kindergarten and First Grade:

- ♪ Many singers singing in tune and with pleasing quality
- ♪ Body coordination improved and expressed in many rhythms
- ♪ Ability to keep a steady beat while singing rhythms of melodies
- ♪ Understanding of high/low, loud/soft, slower/faster in music
- ♪ Ability to speak or sing at sight a growing number of rhythmic and tonal patterns
- ♪ A growing repertoire of songs and hymns for life-long use, as well as many others "just for fun" and just for now.

These units are designed to be used with the above two age groups - ideally 3 and 4-year-olds in one group and Kindergartners and First Graders in another. In smaller parishes the two groups may be combined, adapting the plans to suit the larger age span. Each session outline will speak first to the entire group and then note what may be *added* for the older children. Considering the short attention span of this age-group, there is more material suggested for each session than you may be able to use. Try to choose wisely without neglecting any one type of discovery over a long period of time. And remember - these **children, especially the youngest, love repetition** and a somewhat predictable order from one week to the next. Take advantage of this to enable much, *much* review of past songs, games and other activities - even when the session plan does not specifically call for it.

Session 1

1. Greet the children as they arrive, and place name tags around their necks. Seat them in a circle on the floor. Have your hand puppet on one hand to help you. Introduce the puppet as well as yourself. This can be done in a "singing conversation," using an alternating A and F# as you sing, "My name is Ma-ry. So glad to meet you.... This is my friend Rover. He's glad to see you...." in a typical "childhood chant."

My name is Ma-ry. So glad to see you!

This is my friend (etc.)

Then tell the children you will sing them a song to tell them "who else" you are. Sing "If Anybody Asks You Who I Am." Ask the children who they are (a child of God).

If an-y-bod-y asks you who I

am who I am who I

am If any-bod-y asks you

who I am, say that I'm a
child of God.

American Folk Song

2. Talk about different voices.

Ask them to echo different kinds of voices:
This is my whispering voice.
This is my talking voice.
This is my calling voice! (louder)
(Singing on a *sol-mi* pattern) "This is my singing voice."

How many different kinds of voices God has given us!!

See Choristers Guild Poster (CGPH21) "Your voice . . . sounds."

3. Ask the children, "Now tell me YOUR names." (Demonstrate with your own name:) "Whose name is Mary? My name is Mary."

Whose name is Ma-ry? My name is Ma-ry.

Whose name is (etc.)

Note that, no matter how many syllables in the name, the tune stays on *sol* for the name, to give the starting pitch to the child. (The child may go down to *mi* on a second or third syllable; that's OK.) Ask the most outgoing children first. If a child is very shy, it might be wise to avoid putting him or her on the spot the first day. Explain that you will be asking other children their names next time.

Your voice can make DIFFERENT SOUNDS

whisper



speak



SHOUT



Sing



Session 4

1. Call the roll to start the session, using the music below.

teacher: child:

Where is Jen-ni-fer? I'm here. Where is (etc.)

2. **Warm-up the children's voices.** Begin voice explorations with the owl/siren sounds using large arm movements up and down. Ask for echoes on "Yoo-hoo!" (*sol-mi*) at various pitches (up as high as D-B; down as low as G-E - a bit louder on the higher pitches, but not too loudly on the lower.) Next introduce the "train whistle" song.

"Toot - toot" goes the train.

Ask them to pretend that they are the engineer of the train, blowing the whistle. They must pull the cord down from the ceiling - one short pull and one long - for the two toots.

3. **Repeat the flash-card echo game begun last week.** Use the same two cards. Then ask the children to notice and clap back the rhythm of their own names. Try to fit each (first and last name) into a pattern of *ta's* and *ti-ti's*. Hillary Johnson would be *ti-ti ta ta ta*. Use only the names themselves without rhythm syllables for now. And let the children repeat the names as they clap the rhythm.

4. **Review "God Is So Good."** (See Session 3 for music.) "Remember the new song we sang about God last week? What did it tell us about God?" Sing "God Is So Good" together several times - perhaps remembering other creatures God is good to, also, and putting their names at the end.

e.g., God is good to the birds by giving them food and places for nests, etc. - or good to MacDonald's animals by giving them a good farm to live on.

With a separate group of Kindergarten and First Grade keep reviewing "Jesu, Jesu" refrain.

5. **Introduce the hymn, "Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven."** (See hymn chart on page 13.) "Let's learn a new word today! Listen while I sing the word twice." Sing only the two Alleluia's of the refrain of "Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven." "What was the word I sang?" (You may get several pronunciations!) "Does anybody know what Alleluia means? Listen again, and I'll sing what it means." Sing "Praise the Lord" to the same tune, slurring the last two notes on "Lord." Discuss this word and how many times we will be singing it in church, especially during October. Then sing the words echo style several times. Use the original key of D major.

6. **Practice feeling the beat.** "Let's put a beat in our hands and see how steady we can keep it." (Clap a steady, fairly slow beat together.) "Now let's move the beat to our knees." Continue a *patsched* beat.

"Now follow me..." Put the beat in various places, tapping cheeks, chest, etc. and alternate with clapping.

"Now let's see if we can hear a very soft beat." Make claps barely audible, then very loud. Also try slower and faster.

Waiting Carol" as each group knows. Remind them how important it is to worship with the congregation these four Sundays of Advent so they won't miss the candle lighting.

5. **Introduce refrains of two new carols, "The First Noel" and "Angels We Have Heard on High."** Use the section of "The First Noel" (Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel) and "Angels We Have Heard on High" (*Gloria in excelsis Deo*). Make lots of fun out of that extended angels' song - and encourage appropriate Latin pronunciation, especially on the word "in" (*EEN*). Another refrain which has been an all-time favorite with preschoolers is "Go, Tell It On the Mountain." Be sure to include this one and "Away in a Manger" as well if there is time. Older children may continue work on "Winds Through the Olive Trees" (See Session 8 for music.) with the help of the pictures you prepared. If you wish to use this song in a Christmas service, it might be well to send home copies of the text and ask parents to help the learning process.

6. **Review the recognition game ("Doggie") introduced in Session 9.** Help more of the children feel at home singing the solo line. Encourage and praise every good effort!

7. **Play a Christmas game.** Use a real candle, a star and shepherd's staff cut out of construction paper, and play the "Who has..." game.

Give each of the three items to a different child, who must then sing the proper solo answer as his/her item is called for. Those children then pass the items on to another child of their choice. Turn your back so that you don't see who the new keepers are. Let them hold the items behind their backs and show them as they sing their response. After the song is well-learned, a child may also be the "leader," asking the questions.

The musical notation consists of five staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff is in 4/4 time. The lyrics and chords are as follows:

- Staff 1: **All:** D Who has the can-dle? **Solo:** I have the can-dle.
- Staff 2: **All:** Who has the star? **Solo:** I have the star.
- Staff 3: **All:** A7 Who has the shep-herd's staff? **D**
- Staff 4: **Solo:** A7 I have the shep-herd's staff. **D**
- Staff 5: **All:** A7 D A7 D Please pass them on. Please pass them on.

8. **Review the refrain of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel."** Ask the children about the meaning of "Emmanuel." Do as much review of other songs as you can possibly work in - sometimes letting the children choose their favorites.

9. **Sing "Alabaré" as they leave the room.**

Session 11

1. **Review Part 1 of Session 10.** You may need to use this session to prepare the children for a special presentation during the Advent season.

2. **Sing the musical roll call.** Try to give each child a matchable pitch. Proceed to other vocalises as usual. An adult with a childlike but very free tone can be a great "model" for the children, as well as the recording of children's voices they are listening to at home. If you as director have a lower voice and cannot be such a model, try to get a partner or assistant to work with you. The importance of these early vocalizations cannot be over-emphasized! The right seeds sown now will bear wonderful fruit!

3. **Review all flashcards.** Use songs with words to "double" the rhythm syllables where possible. In other words, do both ways the cards which can be matched to songs.

4. **Review "Away in a Manger" with motions.** Light three candles on the Advent Wreath

5. **Introduce refrain for "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" (last two phrases).**

Hark! The her-ald an-gels sing,
"Glo-ry to the new-born king!"

Introduce "Joy to the World" to older children. Possibly connect with the "Yo-ho" vocalise - i.e., downward scale - (See Session 10 for music.) by singing the rhythm of "Joy to the World" on the "ho" syllable descending before introducing words to the carol. Older children continue "Winds Through the Olive Trees" - all four pictures and stanzas introduced by now (See Session 9 for music). A favorite activity for some groups has been for the director to hold up a number of fingers to indicate a stanza, with the group responding with the first words of that stanza. For example, three fingers

should bring the response: "Then from the happy skies," four fingers: "For in a manger bed," etc. (Note that stanza **four** begins with the word **for**!) This "game" may be condensed by using only the first **word** of each stanza - "Winds," "Sheep," "Then," and "For."

6. **Use "Alabaré" (See Session 5 for music.) as a way to experience forms of musical expression:** slower and faster, higher and lower, softer and louder. Don't combine these concepts yet; do one repetition of the song to illustrate **each** concept.

7. **Play "Who Has the Candle" game from Session 10 OR do a dramatization of part of the Christmas story,** letting individual children be Mary, Joseph, innkeeper, animals, etc.

8. **Sing several seasonal songs or review Christmas hymns,** depending on your own plans for Christmas.

9. **Select a closing song.** Choose either a review song to sing quietly as they leave or sing the refrain of "O Come, All Ye Faithful." ("O come, let us adore him, etc.")

O, come, let us a - dore him, O,
come, let us a - dore him, O,
come, let us a - dore him,
Christ the Lord!

Mid-year Musings

One of the first things a teacher must do after Christmas is to adjust the last half of the curriculum to the date of Easter (and related season of Lent, etc.) according to the new year's calendar. Feel free to move whole sessions if necessary—but try to keep a logical sequence as you introduce and reinforce concepts, new songs and other material. Be especially careful to introduce Palm Sunday and Easter songs in plenty of time for learning before that date.

For the balance of the year some of the sessions may seem briefer, but that is only to give you abundant opportunity to implement your own creativity, and also to review and repeat as much as possible.

For the coming lessons the outline will change slightly:

- ♪ #3 will introduce flash cards of **tonal** patterns and combine them with rhythmic patterns already introduced.
- ♪ #4 will often suggest just **one** review song so that new song material can be introduced earlier in the session while the children are still fresh.
- ♪ #8 should include as **many** songs as possible. Don't be limited to what is suggested here, and don't be afraid of "singing the same songs, week after week." The children **want** to sing their favorites as often as possible! When you repeat a song, attempt to add one new element to it, for example,
 - add an instrument,
 - add movement,
 - adapt the text to a new season,
 - add body percussion (clapping, *patschen*, stamping),
 - dramatize the song, etc.

But give plenty of chances for "just singing."

Musical concepts will be expanded to include the entire list of ten suggested by Lois Choksy in *The Kodály Method*, 2nd Edition (Prentice-Hall, p. 21).

1. louder, softer
2. faster, slower
3. timbre
4. longer, shorter
5. beat
6. accent (stress)
7. stepping, skipping (duple/triple compound meters)
8. phrase (breathing places)
9. form (same, different [phrases])
10. higher, lower

Be sure to add to these "concepts" some work with "inner hearing"—a most important skill for ear training, and one that even preschoolers can begin with enthusiasm. For additional ideas on all of the above, see Choksy, p. 31 and pp. 48 and 49.

For some there is a question about the use of "secular" songs in a church setting. In defense of this need:

1. There is much evidence that children can learn music skills best through use of their "native" folksongs.
2. Few sacred songs lend themselves effectively to the playful and even humorous approach needed for teaching certain concepts. Indeed, those who question any use of secular songs might object even more strongly to "demeaning" precious hymns and sacred songs in that way.
3. Be sure that your use of these "game songs" in no way decreases the time spent on religious music—especially those songs which can become part of a life-long sacred repertoire.

Session 13



1. **Greet the children.** Since this will be your first session after Christmas, greet the children with some (preferably sung) questions about their Christmas celebrations, trips to grandparents, etc.

2. **Review all previously-used vocalises.** Have fun exploring the voice!

“Toot - toot” goes the train

Ooo - oo goes the si - ren.

Yo - ho, _____

Yo - ho (etc.) ..

 Four lines of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first line has a melody for 'Toot - toot' and 'goes the train'. The second line has a melody for 'Ooo - oo goes the si - ren.'. The third line has a melody for 'Yo - ho, _____'. The fourth line has a melody for 'Yo - ho (etc.) ..'.

3. **Review all flashcards introduced in sessions 1-12.** You might choose the names of children that match the rhythms on the cards. Then show two cards to the children and ask the children which card matches the rhythm of the name.

4. **Introduce Epiphany to the children.** Ask who else came to see the baby Jesus besides shepherds. “Have you ever heard the word ‘Epiphany?’” (Ask them to say it after you.) January 6 - Epiphany - is the day many churches celebrate the visit of the wise men from far away. How did they find the baby? Do you think they traveled over any mountains? Let’s sing ‘Go, Tell It On the Mountain.’ Is that what the wise men did after they had seen Jesus?”

5. **Introduce “Children of the Heavenly Father”** (Use your hymnal or see *United Methodist Hymnal*, 141). “God took care of the baby Jesus just as God takes care of you. One of my favorite hymns tells about it. Listen.” Sing “Children of the Heavenly Father” (first stanza only). Ask, “What else besides children did I sing about?” Birds: God takes care of them, too! Sing once more, asking if any of the children already know the song. Tell them they will be learning it in the coming weeks.

Session 26

1. **Begin with a singing conversation.** It is important to begin each session in a normal manner even though this is a special day. Use the "gathering" of children (and guests) as a chance to demonstrate some of the "singing conversation" and other activities of a typical session. Adapt to your own situation.

2. **Practice vocalises.** Use your standard vocalises to demonstrate the explorations of the voice - going back to echoing the four kinds of voices as we did in early sessions, but also including the most recent exercises.

3. **Demonstrate the flashcards.** Don't hesitate to take time for the full set of flashcards. This, too, will be of great interest to your visitors - or, if there are no visitors - the children's last chance to work with them this season.

4, 5, 6, 7, 8. **Carry out the plans for which you have prepared in previous sessions.** For this occasion you may wish to depart a great deal from our regular outline - e.g., no "review" as such, and no "new song" to be introduced (although that would be of interest, too, should you wish to demonstrate it).

9. **Conclude with the song you have perceived as the children's all-time favorite, or the one they sing the very best.** Send them off with high praise - and a treat, if possible - looking forward to being back in choir again next year!

**AND FOR YOUR OWN DEDICATED WORK -
MUCH PRAISE AS WELL!**