



STEPPING STONES:

An Ecumenical Children's Choir Curriculum

C. Michael Hawn, Editor

Early Elementary Level, Year 1

(Primary Age)

by Betty Bedsole

Also available:

Early Elementary Listening CD, Year 1 (code CGCD17.)

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

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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 solfège supported by hand signs that reinforce melodic movement visually and kinesthetically
- 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 two books:

Early Childhood Level, Year 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, Year 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.

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 (from Garland office only, 2834 W. Kingsley Rd., Dallas, Texas 75238).

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 the 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 the children's ability to sing in choirs and participate in worship.

Enjoy *Stepping Stones*!

C. Michael Hawn, Editor and Project Coordinator

Additional materials include:

Early Elementary Listening Tape (CGCT22)

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

Music Mart Flash Cards *

Handsign Ladder (MM1a)

Rhythm Cards (MM3a)

Solfege/Rhythm Cards (MM5a)

Melody Flash Cards (MM6a)

*These are available only from Choristers Guild office, 2834 West Kingsley Road, Garland, TX 75041

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| “Christ Is Born” | |
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| “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice” | |
| <i>Gloria</i> refrain from “Angels We Have Heard on High” | |
| “The Lord Is My Shepherd” | |
| “The Day of Resurrection” | |

Symbol Key:

| | |
|---|------------|
|  | for sing |
|  | for listen |
|  | for write |
|  | for watch |

* Included on Listening Tape (CGCT23)

STEPPING STONES: Early Elementary Level

INTRODUCTION

It is not possible for one teacher to write detailed lesson plans for another. Each teacher has his/her own individual teaching style and each group of children is different. When I use these materials with my own choirs, it will be necessary for me to alter the plans according to the responses of the children. I've written this material as if I were talking to you—the choir director. These plans are offered as suggestions rather than instructions.

Now, some things about the way it is written. I recently had the opportunity to study the Kodály concept of music education with Dr. Alan Strong and Dr. Jean Sinor. I am grateful for their instruction and influence on my writing and teaching. Many of their teaching techniques have been implemented in these materials.

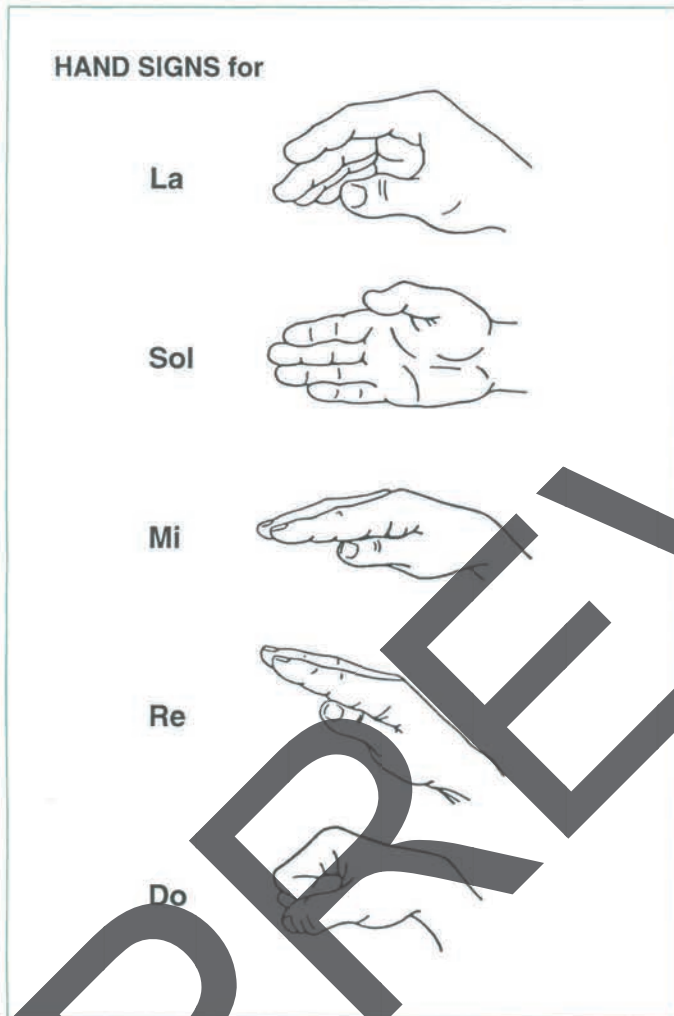
First, the format of the lessons. Dr. Strong suggests the following:

1. Opening: something familiar (e.g. a known song)
2. Moderate concentration
3. Heaviest concentration
4. Lighter concentration
5. Closing: something familiar (e.g. a singing game)¹

I have chosen to begin each session with a singing game because the children do not all arrive at choir at the same time, yet they need to be involved in music making from the moment they enter the room. The games I suggest at the beginning are ones that are enjoyable, yet do not involve a great deal of activity. More active games are placed at the end of the rehearsal. There are pedagogical reasons for the order of the songs and games. If you choose to move an activity from one session to another, it is important to exchange it with another song or game that has the same rhythmic and melodic elements. You may want to change the order of activities within a session because of your perception of what is heavy, moderate or light concentration **for your children**. Vocal Preparation may be at the beginning of the rehearsal or at the time that seems most appropriate to you.

First, a sequence of preparation, presentation and practice is used in each session. During this sequence of preparing, presenting and practicing, children experience rhythmic and melodic elements through singing, clapping and playing games before they are introduced to the name of the element. After the rhythmic or melodic concept has been presented it is practiced through more singing, clapping and playing games. Concepts are presented in a variety of ways and should not become a drill.

This system uses the “moveable *do*” approach. In other words, *do* is always the “home tone” of the song. Knowledge of the hand-signs used in the Kodály methodology is important. The hand signs support the singing of the tonal syllables (*do, re, mi, etc.*). Below are the signs for *do, re, mi, sol, and la*. These are the signs that will be used in the sessions during the year:



Second, it is important to develop the singing voice. Beautiful singing and the enjoyment of music by the children are key elements of the Kodály concept. In order to help the children sing better, remember the following:

- Provide the children with good vocal models to imitate.
- Singing should be unaccompanied until pitches and rhythms are secure.
- Do not sing with the children; rather, let them develop independence in singing.

At this point an accompaniment may be added. You may need to sing to get a game started but stop singing as soon as you can. A term that is used throughout is *echo-sing*. This means simply that you sing the phrase for the children to imitate.

Third, you will need to use supplemental materials. You will need to supplement the materials here with anthems that are most appropriate for your situation. Throughout the year I will be referring to the following anthems and collections published by Choristers Guild as examples of good music for younger children:

Collections

- ♪ *Canons, Songs and Blessings* by Helen Kemp (CGC27)
- ♪ *Psalms Together, Vol. 1* by Jane Marshall (CGC18)
- ♪ *Songs and Seasons* by Michael Bedford (CGA540)
- ♪ *Seven Songs for the Church Year* by Michael Bedford (CGA693)

Additional Anthems

- ♪ “Come, Let Us Sing to the Lord” (CGA478) by Jody Lindh
- ♪ “Jesus Hands Were Kind Hands” (CGA483) arr. Sue Ellen Page
- ♪ “Lo, He Comes” (CGA487) by John Horman
- ♪ “Small Deeds” (CGA562) by John Horman
- ♪ “Your Trusting Child” (CGA614) by Shirley McRae

A further resource that might be of help to you is the following:

- *Of Primary Importance* by Helen Kemp (CGBK50)

Finally, *Stepping Stones* encourages the development of hymn singing. The following hymnals and abbreviations are referred to in the body of the units:

- *Baptist Hymnal, 1991* (BH)
- *Hymnal 82, 1985* (H82)
- *Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978* (LBW)
- *The Presbyterian Hymnal, 1990* (PRH)
- *United Methodist Hymnal, 1989* (UMH)
- *Worship III, 1986* (W3)

Session 12

Vocal Preparation: Review the "Gloria" vocalise.

1. Play "Star Light."
2. Sing "Star Bright" (*Songs and Seasons*) and indicate for children to join you. Add the bells. Your ringers will need to come to the rehearsal.
3. Sing and sign greetings on *mi, re,* and *do,* i.e.

Two staves of musical notation. The first staff shows the melody for 'Hello, Mary Ann' with lyrics 'Hel - lo, Ma - ry Ann'. The second staff shows the same melody with lyrics 'Hel - lo, Ma - ry Ann'.

4. Have children turn to "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" in the hymnal.
 - ♪ Sing the first stanza as the children follow the words in the hymnal.
 - ♪ Sing each phrase of the first stanza for the children to echo-sing.
 - ♪ When pitches and rhythms are secure, add the accompaniment.
5. Rehearse anthems.
6. Write the rhythm syllables for "Bow, Wow, Wow" on the chalkboard before choir.

Two lines of rhythm syllables. The first line shows three vertical bars followed by a sigma symbol (Σ). The second line shows a vertical bar, a square box, and a vertical bar followed by a sigma symbol (Σ).

Have children read the rhythm syllables. Ask the children what song they read. Sing the song with hand signs and tone syllables.

Four lines of tone syllables. The first line shows three vertical bars followed by a sigma symbol (Σ) and the syllable 'd'. The second line shows a vertical bar, a square box, and a vertical bar followed by a sigma symbol (Σ) and the syllable 'm'. The third line shows three square boxes followed by a vertical bar and a sigma symbol (Σ) and the syllables 's s s l s m d'. The fourth line shows a vertical bar, a vertical bar, and a vertical bar followed by a sigma symbol (Σ) and the syllables 'm r d'.

👁️👁️ Show the children a chart that has the song (notes and words) written on the staff. Have them read the chart singing tone syllables. Ask what tone is between *mi* and *do* on the staff.


7. Play "Bow Wow Wow" or let the children choose a game to play.

✓ **EVALUATION:** Remember! Even when the children are planning to sing in church soon, begin your rehearsals in the normal place and manner. They will respond better when you move to the sanctuary to rehearse.






Teacher writes    Σ
 Children say *tah tah tah*


6. Play "Here Comes A Bluebird."


 Tell the children that they will learn a new music symbol today. Then write two *tahs* on the board. Draw a curved line between them and draw a bow to "tie" the notes together.



 Tell the children that when we read this rhythm we say "tie" and count two beats.

 Then tell them that there is another way to write this. Draw a half note  on the board and say "two" holding it two beats.

 Read "Here Comes A Bluebird" again. Draw a bow between the first two notes in the third measure and say "tie."

 Ask the children to tell you another way to write the tie. When they tell you the answer, draw a half note at the beginning of the third phrase and erase the second *tah*.



EVALUATION: The art of teaching is one that might be described as "theme and variation." A song as introduced might be called the basic theme. The variations come in all of the creative ways that you can enhance the song upon repetition.

You might add instruments. On the "Who's That?" song on page 35, a quarter note beat on a wood block might sound like the knocking of a door.

You might add movements. There are ideas provided above.

You might adapt the text. Children enjoy hearing their own names inserted in a song. Look for places to adapt a text to your situation. For example, substitute the following text for the "Who's That" song and make it a greeting song:

Mary* I am glad to see you.

Welcome. Come and sing with us.

Remember! Theme and variation leads to creative and exciting teaching.

*Substitute any child's name.

Session 16

Vocal Preparation: Starting on the pitch C an octave above middle C, sing two “alleluia’s” on a descending major scale in a steady quarter-note rhythm. (Hint: The first phrase of “Joy to the World” uses the pitches of a descending major scale.) Work for an open (north-south) vowel on *Ah* and round, puckered lips on *OO*. As the children sing lower, have them sing lighter. Encourage the children to take their right arm and bring it down over their head as they take a breath and begin the first “alleluia.” Begin each successive “alleluia” up a half-step until you reach a high F pitch. Work on pure vowels and a legato singing tone.

1. Play “How Many Miles To Babylon?”

How man - y miles to Ba - by - lon?
 Three score and ten Will
 we be there by cand - le - light?
 Yes, and back a - gain.
 O - pen the gates and let us through!
 Not with - out a beck and bow!

Here's the beck, here's the bow!
 O - pen the gates and let us through!

- Teach the song. Sing it all the way through, then in phrases for the children to echo-sing
- Teach the game.

Have the children form two rows facing one another. On the word “beck” the children in row one bend back. On the word “bow” the children in row two “bow” forward. On the words “Open the gates” the children in both rows walk forward and exchange places with the person standing opposite. (Row one walks “through” row two and row two walks “through” row one.)¹¹

2. Have the accompanist play “Morning Has Broken” while the children go to their chairs.
3. Sing greetings to the children on pitches *do*, *re*, and *mi*.
4. Sing “Morning Has Broken.” Echo-sing each phrase.
5. Work on anthems.
6. Sing “Who’s That” for the children to identify.
 - Have the children sing the song with the words.
7. Play “Who’s That?” See session 15 for music.

¹¹Ibid., p. 158-159.

“Grant, O God, Your Blessing”
from
Seven Songs
for the Church Year
(CGA693)

by Michael Bedford

1. Ask children to bow their heads, close their eyes, and listen as you sing a prayer song for them.
2. Sing “Grant, O God, Your Blessing” (with accompaniment) to the children.
3. Make a chart like the one shown here that shows the rhythm and words to first stanza of the song. Display where children can see it.

4. Sing each phrase without accompaniment for the children to echo-sing while looking at the chart. Work for a sustained, legato sound. Make sure the vowels are tall.

5. Repeat as needed for the children to learn, but do not drill. When pitches and rhythms are secure, add accompaniment.

6. Pass out the music to the children. Guide them to see the relation between what is on the chart and what is on pages 12 and 13 of the music.

7. Add words of second stanza to the chart and follow the process in #4, 5, and 6.

8. When the song is memorized, add the handbell ostinato played by three children.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|-----|--------|----------|-------------|--------|--------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Grant, | O | God, | your | bles - sing | on | us | as | we | pray; |
| Grant, | O | God, | your | bles - sing | on | us | all | this | day; |
| Just | as | Je - | sus | prayed | to | you | in | the | wil - der - ness; |
| (For | the | things | that | we | do | wrong, | please, | O | God, for - give. |
| Let | us | pray | ev' - ry | day; | hear, | O | Lord, | and | bless. |
| Help | us | all, | great | and | small, | live | as | Je - sus | lived.) |

“He Comes”
from
Songs and Seasons
(CGA540)

by Michael Bedford

1. Pass out music to the children; turn to p. 13. Sing the song for the children with accompaniment. Ask the children to follow the words and music as they listen to the song. Ask them to count how many times you sing “He Comes.” (12 times)
2. Tell the children you are going to sing the song again. Ask them to sing with you each time you sing “He Comes.” Sing again using accompaniment with children joining on “He comes.”
3. Sing measures 5-6 and 9-10 for the children to echo-sing (without accompaniment). Talk about how these two phrases are alike and how they are different. (The rhythm is the same. The pitches are the same on the words “He comes in the name.” On the words “of the Lord” the notes of the first phrase go up and back down, while on the second phrase they go straight down the scale.)
4. Have children sing measures 3-10 with accompaniment.
5. Tell the children that you’re going to sing the whole song again (echo-singing). They will sing what they have just learned. You will sing the second part, and they’ll sing their part again. Sing again with accompaniment, with children singing measures 3-10 and you singing measures 11-18.
6. Sing measures 11-18 in two measure phrases (without accompaniment) for the children to echo-sing.
7. Combine short phrases to make four-measure phrases for children to echo-sing without accompaniment.

8. Have children look at their music and sing measures 11-18 with accompaniment.

9. Have children sing the entire song with accompaniment while looking at their music.

10. Guide children to memorize the song. Most of it will be memorized by this time. Have them echo-sing phrases that are not secure.

11. Add handbells, hand chimes, resonator bells, or glockenspiel.

“Hosanna to the Son of David”
from
Seven Songs
for the Church Year
(CGA693)

by Michael Bedford

(Before choir, go over the melody line of the children’s music with a yellow highlighter pen.)

1. Introduce the anthem by telling the children about Jesus riding on a donkey through Jerusalem with the crowd waving palm branches. Read Matthew 21:1-9. Showing a picture of Jesus riding a donkey and the crowd waving palm branches would help the children understand the context of the anthem.
2. Using the accompaniment, sing the song to the boys and girls. Ask them to look at the music and follow the words as you sing. As they learn the song, consider having them dramatize the text.
3. Sing measures 3-10 in two-measure phrases without accompaniment for the children to echo-sing.
4. Combine short phrases and sing four-measure phrases for the children to echo-sing.