
Letter to the Editor

Bernarr Rainbow

The Editor,
British Journal of Music Education.

6 Townshend Terrace,
Richmond,
Surrey
TW9 1XL

29 April 1991

Sir,

The Kodály Concept and its Pedigree

Any mention of Kodály not made in a kneeling posture risks retribution from his more argumentative disciples. Alas, in her reply to my article Cecilia Vajda has devoted considerable energy and space to attacking claims and statements I simply did not make. Your readers will be able to judge for themselves how adequately she has dealt with the six points I did raise; and to what extent her response simply amounts to drum-banging.

To begin with, nowhere have I made 'desperate attempts to prove that all Kodály principles emanate from Curwen'. I am quite sure they do not; my concern has been to gain recognition for a certain few of them that demonstrably do.

Then Miss Vajda tells us she can find no evidence in his *Teacher's Manual* to support my claim that Curwen approved the use of other finals than *doh* for modal tunes. Here is the evidence she could not find:

There is one point of more serious importance to which I would attract the attention of missionaries in Eastern countries. It is the fact that those nations are no confined to our *doh* and *lah* modes, and that we must expect to find amongst them tunes founded upon *ray* or *me*, or *soh*, as the principal or key-tone. I have printed a large number of these in my 'Historical Specimens'. The principles on which these modes are founded are shown in 'Standard Course', pp. 69–73.

The source of this passage, p. 312 of Curwen's *Teacher's Manual*, was clearly given in a footnote to my article.

However, when in her reply Miss Vajda went on to say 'It is true that there are a few mistakes' in Erszébet Szönyi's account of the origins of the Kodály Concept, this uncharacteristic admission proved quite disarming. And when a supposedly jocular reference to Kodály's non-use of handsigns followed, it seemed she was about to disclose (as I had asked) who it was that altered five of Curwen's handsigns so advantageously. That hope, however, was disappointed.

Yet with her durable Hungarian connections Miss Vajda seems peculiarly well-placed to discover who changed the handsigns for *fah*, *te*, *fe se* and *ta*. My article showed that it was neither Jöde nor Kodály himself – as hitherto assumed. If, as we suspect, she cannot answer this question herself could not Cecilia Vajda find out for us?

Yours, etc.,
Bernarr Rainbow