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*What first struck me about the Stepping Notes lessons was how they captured the fundamentals of musicianship in a completely natural, intuitive and fun way. By the end of my son's time with Nikhil, he acquired a fantastic sense of subdivision of rhythm and his sense of pitch and ability to express it in Solfa language was something that as a professional musician, at his age, I wish I had developed in this way.*

*The piano musicianship classes developed all the aspects of music making which were set up in Stepping Notes. The lovely aspect of the piano lessons is that three students shared the piano and were constantly playing by ear; each child being asked to suggest in a structured way the bass and then harmony to fit the melody they were playing - and then swapping around!*

*Of course they were also learning to play together in ensemble and were developing their listening skills as well as establishing their piano technique - all of this done with such joy of spirit led by Nikhil.*

*Angela's teaching is also embedded in Nikhil's Stepping Notes method - a unique personal blend of Colourstrings, Kodaly and Dalcroze teaching methods, all mutually supporting each other. Angela has a real gift in teaching the early years and it was a joy to see my son consider the violin lesson a highlight of his week.*

*In short, the time that my son spent in the Stepping Notes Music School, the piano and violin lessons, has set him up for life with a firm foundation of all the principals of what I think music making is all about. I can't recommend this fantastic husband and wife team highly enough to anyone, and if your child were to be offered the chance to join their groups - jump at the chance!*



Stuart Stratford

After “Stepping Notes” – piano classes with Nikhil Dally

My son [REDACTED] has been learning with Nikhil since he started “Stepping Notes” in January 2000 (Year 1 of primary school). When he ‘graduated’ from “Stepping Notes” he continued weekly lessons with two other children, learning to play the piano as a threesome. It was initially hard to imagine how this would work out, but it was immediately clear that it worked very well, and it has continued to do so for over five years. All three children have different strengths, and brought different skills to the lessons, meaning they all learnt from each other as well as from Nikhil.

Initially, each child would bring a piece of music they liked - anything: a hymn, a TV jingle, a popular song - and all three would work on it - the lead child initially working on the melody, the other two working on chords and base line. As they grew more competent, they would all have a turn at each part of the music, often finishing by playing each piece as a duet or trio. During the course of working on each piece of music, some particular subject of theory would be highlighted, and they would all sit down on the floor to learn particular chords structures / rhythms / ways of playing - the more formal aspects of music lessons - that were relevant to their pieces.

As well as teaching them to play the piano, Nikhil has continued teaching what he calls 'musicality', this understanding of theory and rhythm that underlies all music. Nikhil's great skill is to enable his pupils to absorb this effortlessly, without them realising that they are actually learning anything at all. I've been so impressed by this that I find it hard to put into words, not being a musician myself, but it is this technique of the children not seeming to be learning in a formal manner, just having fun and enjoying themselves, but at the same time assimilating an understanding of how the music 'works', that is so magical.

I've sat in on every other lesson for five-and-a-half years, and couldn't say that I've ever been conscious that [REDACTED] has been 'taught' to read music - but now, at 13, he can bring home a 6-page score from school that he's never heard, and sit down and play it: *Take Five* by Dave Brubeck, *Wonderwall* by Oasis, some background music from a film. By the end of the week he can play it fluently, in any key (of course!) - mostly from memory, but using the score to prompt him. He can hear a piece of music on the radio and work it out himself, adding chords and baseline as he wants - he can perk it up to make it more lively, or tone it down to make it more sober. This ability to just sit down and work something out with no music at all is, I think, a magical skill.

I just love the way [REDACTED] will sit down at the piano at odd times of day, and work away at the latest piece of music. I love the way he rattles through all his favourite songs before bed. I love the way he now plugs his iPod into their speakers, sets them up on top of the piano, and blares out the latest song while working out the accompaniment, until he can play the whole thing himself. He can hear, and understand, music in a way I have no concept of - "Mum, listen, can you hear the walking baseline in that song?" (Well, *duh*, actually, no.... just *what* is a walking baseline??)

I would highly recommend this approach of sharing lessons. Not only do the children learn from each other, and from hearing what Nikhil has to say to the others, but the lessons become a social event – something to be actively looked forward to each week, not just 'a lesson'. And perhaps it takes the pressure off a little too, occasionally being able to just sit and listen; not to be always the focus of attention.

I'm quite certain that the background of “Stepping Notes” and the lessons [REDACTED] continues to receive from Nikhil is the reason that he's at the top of his music class at school: he finds the work easy and interesting, and he gains more from his school lessons than he would otherwise have done.

In short, if your child has enjoyed “Stepping Notes”, do continue to have music lessons with Nikhil; your child will continue to learn and – perhaps more importantly – to enjoy and appreciate the music they hear around them. I cannot recommend Nikhil highly enough.

*S.Milligan, April 2008.*

**Nikhil Dally**

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**From:** Tessa Jackson [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 27 August 2012 14:27  
**To:** Nikhil Dally  
**Subject:** reference

My children have attended Nikhil's classes for seven years, first the stepping notes and now the piano musicianship classes.

His lessons have had a great positive influence on both children, they now have an innate understanding of music which is a great gift for life for with I am grateful to Nikhil for. One of my sons is dyslexic and Nikhil's method has been a great one for him as it has allowed him to gain such a great understanding without the initial use of notation; this child now has a very special smile when he plays the piano as he knows he can do it and has a degree of accomplishment where in so many other areas he may struggle. Additionally because of his enjoyment of music he can be heard playing the piano and composing for an hour or two at a time regularly and unbidden, not something he does in any other area of education!

Our house often has music ringing out with single players, duets and trios; normally piano based but the children involve their ukuleles and sometimes the cornet and composed by ear and understanding its construction and how to alter it amongst the keys, altering chords and positions – all experience's gained from Nikhil.

It's one of the best things I have ever done with the children or for them as it is an important skill for life and one that I do not feel could be gained with ease from anything other than the Kodaly method.

Thank you Nikhil

T Nelson