

**Teaching violin holistically: towards a deeper understanding of the  
Colourstrings violin approach**

by

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### **Declaration**

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## *Abstract*

The purpose of this study is to discover how the Colourstrings violin approach is an expression of the philosophy of holistic education. This is achieved through a thorough literature review of firstly the philosophy of holistic education, followed by the Colourstrings violin approach. The eight main principles of holistic education are highlighted and the pedagogical material of the Colourstrings approach is analysed to give the reader a deeper understanding of the approach. These principles are then used to find the correlations and possible differences between the philosophy of holistic education and that of the Colourstrings violin approach.

The researcher comes to the conclusion that the Colourstrings approach has been constructed with the education of the whole child as primary aim, in the same way that holistic education endeavours to educate all aspects of the child. Holistic education involves all school subjects in a school setting, thus comparing it to an approach which involves only the subject of the violin within a private tuition setting has its limitations. Nevertheless, the researcher finds major similarities between the two philosophies, which prove that the Colourstrings violin approach develops all facets of the child, and as such can be viewed as an expression of the philosophy of holistic education.

## *Opsomming*

Die doel van die studie is om te ondersoek in watter mate die Colourstrings vioolbenadering 'n vergestaltung is van die holistiese opvoedingsfilosofie. Om dit te bereik is 'n deeglike literatuurstudie van eerstens die holistiese opvoedingsfilosofie en daarna die Colourstrings vioolbenadering gedoen. Die agt hoof beginsels van die holistiese opvoedingsfilosofie word uitgelig en die Colourstrings pedagogiese materiaal word geanaliseer om die leser dieper insig in hierdie benadering tot vioolonderwys te gee. Hierdie beginsels word dan gebruik om die ooreenkomste en die verskille tussen die holistiese opvoedingsfilosofie en die Colourstrings vioolbenadering uit te lig.

Die navorser het tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat die Colourstrings vioolbenadering ontwerp is met die doel om die kind as geheel by sy vioolonderrig te betrek, op dieselfde wyse wat holistiese onderwys poog om alle aspekte van die kind as mens in die onderwysproses op te voed. Die beperking van hierdie vergelyking lê natuurlik daarin dat holistiese onderwys bemoei is met die volle spektrum van onderwerpe waarmee 'n kind in sy skoolloopbaan te doen kry, terwyl die Colourstrings vioolbenadering beperk is tot een onderwerp, naamlik vioolonderrig, in 'n meer intieme opset. Ten spyte hiervan, het die navorser gevind dat daar duidelike ooreenkomste is tussen Colourstringsbenadering en die holistiese opvoedingsfilosofie, en dat die Colourstrings vioolbenadering as sulks gesien kan word as 'n uitdrukking van die holistiese opvoedingsfilosofie.

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“Being clever is not enough in our modern times; the whole man,  
the solid human qualities of free will and deep feeling, must accompany clever thoughts.”

- Rudolf Steiner (Nielsen, 2004:1)

## CHAPTER 1

---

### *Background, rationale, and statement of research problem*

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Holistic education is an alternative approach to education which rejects repetition, tireless memorisation of facts and excessive authority (Rudge, 2008:1). The holistic education movement aims to challenge the ideals of mainstream education such as fostering competition, obsessive testing, and teaching subjects in an isolated manner, by proposing an education system which is more concerned with the process than the end result. In contrast to mainstream education, holistic education endeavours to educate all facets of the human being including the intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual to produce well-rounded individuals.

The focus is shifted away from standardised testing onto the creativity of the teacher to find unique ways to develop all aspects of each individual child. Educators of holistic education seek to foster cooperation instead of competition; make what is being taught relevant to the child by starting with what is known and moving to the unknown; as well as cultivate a love of learning by encouraging discussion and questioning instead of the memorisation of facts. (Miller, 2000:1).

Contemporary holistic educators find that the implementation of holistic education is now more crucial than ever before. Advocates of holistic education are critical of the current mainstream method of schooling which they maintain only aims to educate the intellect – in order to train individuals who can compete and consume in the global marketplace – but fails to prepare pupils for many other aspects of life. (Mahmoudi, Jafair, Nasrabadi & Liaghatdar, 2012:179). “Generally our education has been dominated by a focus on rationality and individual competition, and has ignored fostering intuition and cooperative approaches to learning” (Miller, 2012:4). The goals of traditional education are perceived as not adequate to equip children with the tools which they need to survive in an increasingly fast-paced world. Kochlar-Bryant and

Heishman (2010:7) state that traditional education does not develop the “flexibility, creativity, understanding, and wisdom being asked of the 21<sup>st</sup> century journeyer”. Habits and ways of thinking need to be acquired which cannot be developed in an education which mainly focuses on the intellectual capacities of students and mostly disregards the development of all other capacities.

In the same way that some teachers of school education have begun calling for a more holistic approach to teaching, teachers of music education have also begun questioning the traditional teaching approach. Gould (2009:8) writes that “it is not difficult to see the need to re-evaluate our identity as musicians and music educators in this changing environment, with digital media dominating the popular culture of our youth, and concert attendance at classical performances waning.” She calls on music educators to find “new and innovative” ways of capturing the imagination of young people.

In my own experience as a violinist and violin teacher I too have noticed the need to re-examine the traditional ways of teaching music. As a young teacher I attempted to teach the violin using traditional approaches such as Suzuki<sup>1</sup> and Eta Cohen and noticed that young children found these approaches hard to relate to. I was introduced to the Colourstrings violin approach by my teacher at the time, and found that children found it fun and easy to understand. The Colourstrings violin approach, which has its foundations in the Kodály concept, is a more holistic approach to teaching the violin as it aims to develop well-rounded musicians, by not only focusing on the music and instrument but taking the whole child into account.

This study aims to draw parallels between the philosophies of holistic education and the Colourstrings approach. In the same way that mathematicians first require a theorem, before they endeavour to prove it, I will take as my point of departure that the Colourstrings approach is indeed holistic, but in which ways, and to what extent it corresponds to the philosophy of holistic education has yet to be proved.

---

<sup>1</sup> I recognise that there are many similarities between the Colourstrings approach and many other violin methods. As I found in my previous study (Björkman, 2011), Szilvay attended various violin teaching courses, including those presented by Shinichi Suzuki and Paul Rolland and was significantly influenced by these important violin pedagogues. I do not diminish the impact or importance of these pedagogues, but as this study seeks only to compare the philosophy of the Colourstrings approach with that of holistic education, a comparison of various violin approaches would not serve to answer the research question of this study. For this reason it does not seem necessary to elaborate on other violin approaches.

## **1.2 RATIONALE**

Advocates of holistic education argue that conventional education fails to consider pupils' needs, as it only educates their intellect in order for them to become well-trained workers. "Education of youth for the sake of national economic superiority is a profoundly self-destructive mistake" (Miller, 1992:23). This is not only evident in mainstream education, traditional music education is similar as it tends to focus on the intellectual side of musical training, while neglecting the physical, artistic, and emotional aspects of music education (Szilvay, 2010:3). The Colourstrings violin approach aims to be more holistic in its approach by aiming to educate all these facets of each pupil.

By aiming to develop the whole child, the Colourstrings violin approach resonates with the philosophy of holistic education. The correlation between the Colourstrings violin approach and the philosophy of holistic education has never been thoroughly explored.

## **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **1.3.1 Main research question**

How does the Colourstrings violin approach relate to the philosophy of holistic education?

### **1.3.2 Sub-questions**

- What constitutes a holistic approach?
- Why is a holistic approach to violin important?
- What aspects of the Colourstrings approach correlate with holistic education?
- What are the cornerstones of the Colourstrings violin approach?

## 1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This will be a descriptive study which will be separated into two parts: firstly a literature review – of the philosophy of holistic education and of the Colourstrings violin approach – and secondly a critical reading of existing Colourstrings violin pedagogy literature in order to identify and evaluate the holistic aspects of the Colourstrings methodology.

A literature review provides an overview of the research within a certain field through an analysis of discussions and developments, but can at best “only summarise and organise the existing scholarship” (Mouton, 2001:180). Although a literature review has these limitations, critical analysis of the existing literature needs to be undertaken before comparative research can take place. The two fields to be researched must be fully understood. The philosophy of holistic education will be investigated to clarify what it encompasses and why it is important. To gain insight into the Colourstrings approach, the available literature on Colourstrings will be reviewed, this will include information about the author of the approach as well as existing material written about the approach.

In terms of critical reading strategies, published methodologies of the Colourstrings approach will be examined with the specific aim of identifying and evaluating occurrences of holistic thinking in this approach. In most of these materials, aspects of holistic thinking are embedded in the techniques and approaches without being explicitly defined as such.

As this thesis is an in-depth study of a single programme, namely the Colourstrings violin approach, document analysis is applicable to this study. The documents that will be examined will comprise of the Colourstrings Handbook for Teachers and Parents, notes that I have made while attending two Colourstrings violin courses, as well as the Colourstrings Violin Books A-D. Working with a closely circumscribed definition of holistic educational approaches and the characteristics thereof, the close reading of these texts will aim to identify core concepts.

I will employ eight principles as identified by Rudge (2008) to compare the philosophies of holistic education and the Colourstrings violin approach. The eight principles are: *spirituality, reverence for life/nature, interconnectedness, human wholeness, individual uniqueness, caring relations, freedom/autonomy and democracy.*

By noting the elements which are similar and those that may differ between the philosophy of holistic education and that of the Colourstrings approach, the researcher will be able to understand how the Colourstrings approach is both informed by the philosophy of holistic education as well as how holistic education is adapted by the Colourstrings approach.

## **1.5 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

### **Chapter 1: Background, rationale, and statement of research problem**

The background to holistic education and holistic education in music education is briefly described. The rationale of the study is followed by the statement of the main research question and sub-questions. This chapter concludes with a description of the research design and methodology used.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

- **An exploration of the principles of holistic education**

Eight significant principles of holistic education, as identified by Rudge (2008), are discussed, with reference to philosophers of holistic education since the 18th century until now. This section is summarised by keywords of the various principles.

- **The background to the Colourstrings violin approach and its goals as violin pedagogy**

The Colourstrings approach is based on the Kodály concept. For this reason the Kodály concept is discussed prior to an exploration of the principles of the Colourstrings violin approach.

### **Chapter 3: Research design and methodology**

The qualitative research method used for this study is called document analysis. A short description thereof appears in this chapter, followed by a detailed analysis of the Colourstrings pedagogical material, as well as keywords of the Colourstrings approach.

#### **Chapter 4: Presentation of the information collected and analysed**

The information collected in the preceding chapters is presented by utilising the eight principles of holistic education to discover in which ways the philosophy of holistic education overlaps with the philosophy of the Colourstrings violin approach.

#### **Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations**

The researcher draws conclusions based on the information presented in Chapter 4: the similarities and differences between the two philosophies are highlighted. This is followed by the limitations which the researcher came across during this study, as well as recommendations by the researcher for further research on this subject.

## CHAPTER 2

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### *Literature Review*

Holistic education as a philosophy has developed under different names for the last two centuries. Since around the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there have been various voices in the literature that have stated mistrust of mainstream education, and proposed an education that does not solely develop the intellectual aspects of pupils, but addresses and develops all other aspects which make us human. There is no general consensus on the ‘family tree’ of holistic education, as Forbes identifies six authors of the past as the forefathers of holistic education, while Ron Miller recognises other figures as significant. John Miller on the other hand alludes to the possibility that holistic education might have originated in ancient Greece. Rudge (2008:8) explains that “[o]verall, holistic education incorporates ideas and principles from humanistic and progressive educators, transpersonal thinkers, anarchists, social critics as well as radical critics.” (Rudge, 2008:8).

In this chapter I will synthesise and evaluate the extensive literature available on the topic of holistic education. This will be achieved by exploring the current discourse on the philosophy of holistic education, with reference to past and contemporary writers on education which holistic educators recognise as significant influencers on the development of holistic education. I will begin by describing the philosophy in broad terms, and then proceed to a more in-depth examination of what the philosophy entails. In my study, I will use the eight principles which Rudge (2008) has identified as characteristic of the philosophy of holistic education as my point of departure.

In the second half of this chapter I will discuss the Colourstrings approach, with reference to the Kodály concept as well as a discussion of how the Colourstrings approach is a translation of the Kodály concept. The chapter will conclude with an explanation of the principles of the Colourstrings violin approach, as advocated for by its creator, Géza Szilvay.

## 2.1 AN EXPLORATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF HOLISTIC EDUCATION

Scott Forbes (2012:7) notes that “the notions central to holistic education are a confluence of several notions from different eras and different disciplines, and have only fairly recently been called ‘holistic education’.” Although advocates for holistic education may have given it different terms throughout the centuries, their focuses have been similar in aiming to educate children in such a way that they develop as well-rounded individuals.

Since about the 1970s the term ‘holistic education’ has come to describe an education which involves the whole child – aiming to develop not only the intellectual, but also the moral, emotional, physical, psychological, artistic and spiritual capacities. This is as a result of a long history of educationalists reflecting on the state of traditional education and finding it lacking. Scott Forbes (2012:5) identifies Rousseau (1712-1778), Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Froebel (1782-1852), Jung (1875-1961), Maslow (1908-1970) and Rogers (1902-1987) as the forefathers of holistic education as “they are acknowledged by most advocates of holistic education to have been highly influential in creating the principal notions in holistic education.” Ron Miller (2000:1) adds Thoreau (1817-1862), Emerson (1803-1882), Alcott (1832-1888) and Dewey (1859-1952) to this list.

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986), Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) and Maria Montessori (1870-1952) were active in establishing schools of ‘alternative education’ around the world. They are recognised as “the founders of the oldest continually existing schools considered by most to be holistic” (Forbes, 2012:7). Rudge (2008:14) identifies John Miller, Ron Miller, Forbes, Nakagawa, Nava, Clark, and Gang as the prominent voices on holistic education since the 1990’s, while Ron Miller (2000:1) recognises these, as well as Parker Palmer and Nel Noddings as particularly influential today.

The holistic education movement as an entity has incorporated two paradigms, namely that of the humanistic on the one hand, and the spiritual on the other (Rudge, 2008:25). Humanistic education emphasises the “enhancement of human development, well-being, and dignity as the ultimate end of all human thought and action—beyond religious, ideological, or national ideals and values” (Aloni, 2014:1). It is concerned

with rational thought and practical experience and does not involve education for inner reflection of any sort (Miller, R., 1998:26). Spiritual education on the other hand is mostly focussed on the relationship with the self, “the quality of our thinking about ourselves, our relationships, our sense of worth and identity, and our sense of well-being” (Bigger, 2003:1). This is not related to any specific religion but acknowledges all world faiths as valuable, and promotes the open qualitative questioning of spirituality.

Various theorists and philosophers on the subject of holistic education have either weighed more importance on the first or the second. “While most educators (Rousseau, Dewey, Holt, Neill, Illich, among others), who have advocated for ideas of freedom and democracy, have always kept spirituality separate from education, contemporary holistic educators try to integrate them” (Rudge, 2008:25). These paradigms are integrated by certain principles which define holistic education. In her doctoral thesis Lucila Rudge (2008:21) discusses the various definitions that the leading theorists of holistic education (John Miller, Ron Miller, Forbes, Nakagawa, Nava, Clark, and Gang) hold, and comes to the conclusion that “each theorist defines certain principles as the foundation of holistic education. Many of them overlap but many others do not.” She identifies *Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective* (1991) – written by Ron Miller, Clark and Gang – as the work that “best synthesizes the principles advocated by the holistic education movement”, but adds that this publication was written in 1991 and thus does not include notions of holistic education that have come about since its publication.

Due to a variety of theorists having varying opinions on the important principles of holistic education, Rudge (2008:19) identifies eight principles that synthesise all the various opinions. She states that “in view of such a complex field with such amplitude of conceptions and definitions, I decided to assign the principles instead of using, for example, the principles listed by *Education 2000*.” She consequently identifies eight principles which she maintains best represents most of the notions promoted by leaders of the holistic education movement.

The eight principles identified by Rudge are: *spirituality, reverence for life/nature, interconnectedness, human wholeness, individual uniqueness, caring relations, freedom/autonomy, and democracy*. Rudge (2008:22) explains that

Four of them (*spirituality, reverence for life/nature, interconnectedness, and human wholeness*) encompass the spiritual/holistic orientation of holistic education whereas the other four (*individual uniqueness, caring relations, freedom/autonomy, and democracy*) comprise the humanistic ideas embedded in its educational paradigm.

Rudge (2008:35) categorises the different influencers of holistic education into three groups: those intellectuals in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century who wrote significant works on alternative education she classifies as ‘the pioneers’; those who were active in establishing schools of ‘alternative education’ in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century are categorised as ‘holistic educators’; and those who are currently active in the world of holistic education are classified as ‘contemporary holistic educators’.

As I also refer to these writers from different eras, I will also employ these broad categories as points of reference. Rudge (2008:19) argues that these eight principles “encompass most of the ideas advocated by the leaders of the holistic movement” thus by using the principles to illuminate the ideas of various leading theorists, I will corroborate that her argument stands true.

As the philosophy of holistic education is multi-faceted, it cannot easily be defined. Miller (1992:5) explains that “holistic education is not to be defined as a particular method or technique; it must be seen as a paradigm, a set of basic assumptions and principles that can be applied in diverse ways.” As the philosophy of holistic education has no concise definition, I will now undertake to illustrate the many facets of the philosophy of holistic education by elaborating on the eight most important principles.

### **2.1.1 Spirituality**

The principle of *spirituality* is central to the philosophy of holistic education – this is not related to one specific religion, but rather involves the inner, individual spiritual life of the child. Holistic educators call for an education that acknowledges the soul as of equal importance as the mind and body. As Nielsen (2004:11) states

regardless of whether or not a purely spiritual dimension exists, there is an unquestionable existence of unseen worlds – creativity, thoughts, feelings, and ‘spiritual-like’ or aesthetic dimensions – in a child, which cannot be fully apprehended through scientific, rational or ‘factual’ learning activities alone.

Instead of only focussing on intellectual activities, holistic education aims to develop the spiritual capacities too, by stimulating the pupils' imagination and developing their creativity.

Holistic educators believe that the child is inherently good and motivated to learn, and thus the environment must be created for this to be developed (Forbes, 2012:38). This environment is established when, in Ron Miller's words (cited by Kochlar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010:7), there is a "concern for the interior life of children; that is, for the feelings, aspirations, ideas and questions that each child brings to the learning process". Each child is seen as entirely unique, and the right guidance can bring their unique self to its full development. When these natural inclinations of a child are fostered, holistic educators maintain that the child will become the best they can be. Working towards becoming their best is what is termed 'human and spiritual development'.

In the past, philosophers and educators have emphasised the importance of human and spiritual development as the focus of education. Amongst others, French philosopher Rousseau, Swiss psychiatrist Jung, as well as American educator Dewey have written about the ways in which traditional education fails to nurture a child's spiritual development. Rousseau (1712-1778) is regarded as one of the most important historical figures of humanistic education as he blatantly rejected religion and any form of societal 'spirituality' (Miller, 2007:69), which aligns with the principles of humanist education as briefly described above. Yet his emphasis on reaching self-fulfilment echoes many of the sentiments of holistic educators, as self-transformation is in essence a spiritual process.

Self-transformation involves acquiring certain skills to become the best version of oneself, as well as being able to remain true to oneself. To become one's best one needs, according to Rousseau (cited by Forbes, 2012:44), "emotional development, full development of our physical capacities, self-reliance, a healthy curiosity, an ability to be in society but not of it, rationality, judgment, and virtue". Semetsky (2012:viii) states that Jung and Dewey are similar in this regard, as both psychologist and philosopher emphasised the fact that "*all* education is always already *moral* education devoted to human *growth*." Thus it is apparent that many holistic educators throughout the ages have placed great emphasis on the spiritual development of the child, and have

endeavoured to nurture it by fostering the emotional and creative sides, while being acutely aware of the moral influence that the teacher has on the pupil.

Forbes (2012:34) notes that many holistic educators have emphasised this influence that the teacher has on their pupils, adding that the teacher needs to take responsibility for their own self-development to have a positive influence on the pupil's self-development. When teachers are committed to becoming their best – becoming fulfilled human beings – pupils gain understanding and insight into the process of self-fulfilment. This is one of the main ways that pupils learn about self-development, by experiencing it through the teacher – whether it be empathetically or vicariously.

This of course ties in with the teacher remaining true to themselves: “Part of what a student experiences in education is the teacher, and what the student experiences of the teacher is what the teacher actually *is*, not what the teacher pretends or intends to be” (Forbes 2012:33). In holistic education the teacher respects the child as an individual with their own unique insights, and the teacher is honest – albeit in an indirect way – about the fact that she too is on a journey of self-discovery and she too has her own failings to contend with. In this way, there is an open, trusting relationship between the teacher and the pupil built on mutual respect and understanding.

Advocates of holistic education maintain that the development of *spirituality* in a child is not only important for the personal growth of the child, but in the long run raises children with empathy. Ron Miller (1998:10) finds that an education that only strives for achievement in the academic sense and disregards the spiritual life of the child, results in human beings without compassion, for their fellow man as well as for nature. He continues:

An education that substitutes curriculum, time-on-task, and [examination] scores for wonder, imagination, and joy is an education that kills the human spirit and permits us to desecrate the Earth. Education must no longer be conceived in economic and utilitarian terms.

To conclude, it is evident that the aspect of *spirituality* highlights some of the differences between traditional education and holistic education. Holistic education does not associate *spirituality* with religion, but instead defines it as the development of the emotional and creative capacities of the child, as well as the fostering of the advancement towards self-fulfilment. The principle of *spirituality* is specifically

connected to the teacher's role in education, as it is the teacher's responsibility to teach pupils about the journey to self-fulfilment by committing to that journey themselves.

### 2.1.2 Reverence for life/nature

This principle is concerned with honouring nature, developing a “sense of reverence towards nature and life, [as well as] developing ecological awareness” (Rudge, 2008:27). According to Rudge (2008:97) this aspect of holistic education is mostly emphasised by contemporary holistic educators. She suggests that, although it is a central aspect of holistic education, it is a relatively new facet of the philosophy. I argue that, for this principle to truly be central to holistic education, it must hark back further than the last twenty odd years.

Rousseau already emphasised this principle in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Forbes (2012:45) explains that “Rousseau's religiousness is summed up in what he called ‘natural religion’” He maintained that humans need to return to their “natural state” and that nature is a form of the divine. This is similar to the belief held by contemporary holistic educators that nature must be revered, as it is sacred – every life (animal, vegetable, human) is sacred: “it has a purpose, it is part of the same web of creation, and hence, deserves respect and admiration” (Rudge, 2008:96).

This *reverence for nature* is nurtured through teaching students about the relationships within nature, as well as teaching them to care for and nurture nature. When this is developed a sense of respect for all aspects of nature – the ecology, the universe, and fellow human beings – is developed alongside the *reverence for nature*.<sup>2</sup>

Developing ecological awareness also has to do with an awareness of the state of the Earth at present and what to do about it. “The ecological crisis demands that we overcome our atomistic individualism and recognise the cultural assumptions behind our ecologically destructive social, economic, and technological practices” (Miller, R., 1998:11). Thus, we can infer that holistic educators view traditional education as teaching in an ‘atomistic’ and fragmented way which has led to the ‘atomistic individualism’ to which Miller refers. By ‘dividing’ life into separate subjects which

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<sup>2</sup> Nobel Peace Prize winner (1952) Albert Schweitzer must also be noted as an influential figure with regards to this aspect of holistic education, although his definition of *reverence for life* is significantly more rooted in religion (Trueblood, 1979:7).

seem unrelated as they are kept apart, only that which is of personal significance to the child is taken heed of, and thus selfishness is promoted. If education nurtures an awareness of the connection between humans and nature and becomes less disjointed, students will be more knowledgeable in terms of living sustainably and caring for nature.

### 2.1.3 Interconnectedness

This principle is what is most emphasised by all holistic educators (Miller, J.P., 1998; Miller, R., 1998; Kochlar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010; Krishnamurti, 1953) and their predecessors. *Interconnectedness* is the foundation of holistic education as is evident by the name of holistic education: the word holistic derives from the Greek word ‘holon’ which signifies “a universe made up of integrated wholes that cannot simply be reduced to the sum of its parts” (Miller, 2007:6). Miller (2007:7) continues by suggesting that ‘holistic’ cannot be interchangeably used with ‘wholistic’ (as it so often is), as the first involves spirituality, while the latter is “more material and biological with an emphasis on physical and social interconnections.” As holistic education acknowledges spirituality as an important aspect of education, it is clearly related to the first rather than the latter.

The concept of *interconnectedness* comes from holistic educators’ opposition to traditional education as an outdated system of education. They argue that traditional education does not address the needs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but is instead stuck in 19<sup>th</sup> industrial society (Miller, R., 1998:9). During that time the primary focus of education was training children to be able to become good workers, disregarding the development of all other aspects of human life. Now, two hundred years later, much more is required of a person than having a mind that is trained to memorise facts and obey orders.

Traditional education does not prepare students for the uncertainty of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and is not in harmony with the current developments in other fields. “Rooted in the reality of nature itself and supported by various spiritual traditions, this vision of interdependence is at the heart of many changes in business, health and education” (Miller, 2007:5). Consequently holistic education aims to connect the child with all aspects of life, while exploring links between all subjects and fields instead of

compartmentalising them. “Through holistic education the child is connected to knowledge, community, the environment, and to the cosmos” (Miller, J.P., 1998:66). Instead of the “atomistic, reductionistic, and fragmenting view” associated with traditional education, holistic educators demand a system of education which is integrative (Miller, R., 1998:12).

Rudge (2008:109) describes the various facets of *interconnectedness* which are being called for: The first facet of *interconnectedness* involves linking the mind and the body – linking experiential learning with intellectual learning. Earlier holistic educators such as Krishnamurti already criticised the emphasis of traditional education on the accumulation of facts and efficiency, arguing that “the whole cannot be understood through the part; it can be understood only through action and experience” (Krishnamurti, 1953:11). When the focus on memorisation of facts is replaced by emphasis on having different experiences, through play, the arts, and involvement with nature, that which is learnt is deeper and more meaningful – the child’s creativity and imagination is stimulated and the whole child is involved in the learning process.

Another, even earlier proponent of holistic education stressed the importance of experiential learning, especially that of play, in the development of the child. The 19<sup>th</sup> century German pedagogue Froebel was the first to develop the ‘kindergarten system’ as a means for children to acquire experiential learning through play. By involving the body and the mind, intellectual as well as experiential learning is acquired. Froebel (cited by Miller, 2007:72) stated that

Play is the first means of development of the human mind, its first effort to make acquaintance with the outward world, to collect original experiences from things and facts, and to exercise the powers of body and mind.

The second facet which Rudge (2008:109) finds as part of the description for *interconnectedness* involves drawing connections between linear and intuitive thinking, in other words involving the creative side as well as the rational abilities of the child. Once again, this is in contrast to traditional education which reinforces the “schizoid split that separates head from heart in our culture” (Miller, J.P., 1998:57). J.P. Miller and Ron Miller call for an education where the arts, creativity and spirituality are regarded as important as science and logic, so that learning is not merely digesting facts, but involves the creative soul as well (Miller, R., 1998:12). Sloan (1998:3) maintains

that “reductionist and fragmented ways of knowing” and learning leads to “impoverished experiences of reality”. Thus we can see that holistic educators consider an educational system without equal emphasis on linear and intuitive thinking as an education system which not only fails to educate children completely but also fails to prepare them for reality.

In true interconnected and holistic fashion, fostering *interconnectedness* involves other principles as well. A third facet of *interconnectedness* is concerned with fostering the relationship between the individual and their community, as well as the individual’s relationship with the Earth. The latter is connected to the *reverence for life/nature* principle which has been discussed earlier; and the former is related to the *caring relations* principle which will be discussed later on.

Throughout the literature (Miller, J.P., 1998; Forbes, 2012) *interconnectedness* is referred to by using words that relate to unity. As Forbes (2012:19) describes, this is the unity between the different aspects of a human being – as described above – as well as the “unification of the individual with something outside of themselves or that is part of a larger self” such as the spiritual world or nature. This brings us to the fourth facet of *interconnectedness* as identified by Rudge (2008:109), which involves nurturing the relationship between the personal and transpersonal self. This facet is related to the principles of *spirituality* as well as *reverence for nature* and has been explored in the discussion of those principles.

To summarise, the *interconnectedness* principle lies at the core of the philosophy of holistic education and is multi-faceted. It is rooted in the fact that holistic educators criticise the way in which traditional education tends to compartmentalise every aspect of life; they propose instead an education which connects the child with the world around them, as well as connects all the different aspects of the child within – leading to a development of not only the rational, intellectual side of the child, but also the creative and spiritual side.

#### **2.1.4 Human wholeness**

This principle is similar to the principle of *interconnectedness*, as it involves the nurturing and development of every facet of a human being, namely, the intellectual,

emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual. Holistic educators view each aspect as of equal importance for the child to become a well-rounded and fully developed individual. Where *interconnectedness* focuses on connections between all aspects of education – those that surround the child as well as those that come from within the child – the principle of *human wholeness* is primarily concerned with the connections *within* the child. Nielsen (2004:13) explains that

General education of the young is not a purely religious, nor material endeavour, not a purely intuitive, nor a scientific one, but is argued by many leading commentators to be a genuinely holistic enterprise, necessary to assist the development of wholeness, individually as well as globally.

Spring (2015:140) identifies *interconnectedness* and *human wholeness* as the two most important aspects of holistic education. By the wealth of information I have found on these two aspects it can be deduced that these two principles are indeed the core concepts of the philosophy of holistic education.

*Human wholeness* involves striving towards balance: “Balance between the intellect and the feelings, logic and creativity, analytic and intuitive thinking, content and process, individual and group learning, concept and experience, learning and assessment” (Rudge, 2008:123). Holistic educators maintain that when an education system regards every aspect of life as of equal importance, the child will become a balanced individual. In addition, holistic educators argue that this balance is essential to the development of a child, as children are not merely future citizens and consumers but are “an intricate and delicate web of vital forces and environmental influences” (Kochlar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010:7). Forbes (2012:2) asserts that most forms of education are primarily concerned with “either enculturation or preparation for work”, whereas the goal of holistic education is “the fullest possible human development with fitting into society and vocation having secondary importance.”

The principle of *human wholeness* also addresses *how* children learn. Holistic educators argue that learning is not purely cognitive, but should involve the whole child. This is achieved, “not through an academic ‘curriculum’ that condenses the world into instructional packages, but through direct engagement with the environment” (Venugopal, 2009). They find that traditional education is mostly focused on developing

the intellect, and consequently involves “purposeless activities and disconnected curriculum” (Rudge, 2008:1) which makes no effort to educate the whole child.

Opposition to this element of traditional education dates as far back as the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Rousseau advocated for teachers to teach children through experiences, their senses, as well as their emotions (Forbes, 2012:49). When children have an emotional connection to what they are taught, that which they learn is not only more easily remembered, but also more easily applied. “After a lesson has been *felt*, a teacher can summarize it verbally, and this, for Rousseau, is the proper use of words: they come after the ‘real knowledge’ of experience to summarize and so form the first level of abstraction” (Forbes, 2012:49). Learning through experience involves the process of searching for knowledge, rather than simply being the receptor of it. Holistic educators maintain that once pupils have gained knowledge, the knowledge may be deepened by becoming more abstract – putting it into words and symbols. This is opposite to the process followed by traditional education, which begins with abstractions.

Holistic educators (Miller, J.P., 1998; Venugopal, 2009; Forbes, 2012) are very critical of a standardised curriculum which is taught in the traditional style of information being transferred mostly verbally to the student. They argue that this is “essentially a one-way flow, [...] there is little or no opportunity to reflect or analyse the information” (Miller, J.P., 1998:57). Forbes (2012:26) notes that an educational environment where pupils are not offered an opportunity to question and evaluate that which is being taught, and is primarily based on the transmission of information and skills, has been viewed throughout history – by significant writers on education such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel – as “more than merely inadequate, it was seen as inhibiting the needed learning”.

Past and present advocates for holistic education call instead for experiential learning – learning through directly experiencing the environment, instead of the mere transferring of information and concepts from teacher to student. “Through experience, the *whole* person is immersed in the process of learning” (Rudge, 2008:124). Experiential learning deepens the learning process and strengthens that which is taught, while nurturing curiosity and a love of learning.

Not only does traditional education give students few opportunities to question that which is being taught, the learning process is usually motivated by fear of punishment or reward. “Experiential knowledge usually distinguishes itself from the types of knowledge found in mainstream education on the basis of *why* that knowledge is acquired” (italics added) (Forbes, 2012:21). If knowledge is acquired out of interest, curiosity, or to fulfil a need, thus from within the student, it is fundamentally different to knowledge acquired through motivation from outside the student, such as standardised tests, rewards, or fear of punishment. Ron Miller (cited by Kochlar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010:7), finds that learning in a holistic learning environment is “more meaningful and relevant to students – it matters to their lives” as they are actively engaged in the learning process, not merely passive receivers of information.

In conclusion, the principle of *human wholeness* is mainly concerned with the fullest development of the whole child. This is attained by doing away with memorisation of facts and instead encouraging questioning and discussion of the learning material. It is clear that experiential knowledge is an integral part of the development of the whole child, as it involves learning that is not only cognitive, but is acquired through the use of all the senses, motivated by the child’s own curiosity and experimentation. Learning and inquiry that comes from within the child and is not motivated by fear of punishment or reward fosters the child’s creativity and love of learning so that children are motivated to continue on the path to self-development.

### **2.1.5 Individual Uniqueness**

The principle of *individual uniqueness* in holistic education involves acknowledging each human being as a unique individual, while also recognising that all human beings are equal. Advocates of holistic education maintain that this is possible only when the approach to education is flexible and adapts to the unique needs of each child, instead of a standardised approach to education which values performance over competence, in the way that traditional education does (Rudge, 2008; Forbes, 2012; Barone, 2010; Krishnamurti, 1953).

“Contemporary holistic educators recognize every person as a unique being with inherent qualities, potentialities, and needs, and with a singular way to interact and

respond to reality” (Rudge, 2008:37). This is in contrast to traditional education which, as Forbes notes, has been seen by both the pioneers of holistic education and contemporary holistic educators as limited and disjointed, as well as “in some way failing to take due account of the student’s real or inner self” (Forbes, 2012:viii).

Rudge (2008:139) credits Rousseau as the first philosopher who promoted a child-centred education and who highlighted the “need to understand and respect individual qualities, differences, and aptitudes in the act of educating.” In this way he can be seen as the pioneer of advocating for *individual uniqueness* – celebrating the fact that each child is unique and needs to be taught as such. He maintained that the teacher needs to be sensitive to the unique manner in which each child learns and grows, and adjust what is being taught accordingly. (Rudge, 2008:139).

The principle of *individual uniqueness* in holistic education is exemplified in the philosophy of the Montessori curriculum, which is child-centred – the activities are not directed by the teacher, but instead each student learns at their own, individual pace. The teacher is no longer the central focus of the classroom but instead acts as a guide for the child’s individualised process of discovery. “The teacher guide[s] students through activities that, on the one hand, [are] personally and practically meaningful to them while, on the other, engaging them in the use of their powers of observation and reflection” (Barone, 2010:584). Thus we can see that allowing the child to progress at their own pace provides the space the child needs to question and discover the world around them. This does not mean that children can do as they please, but rather that they are guided through a structured programme, progressing at their own pace.

Holistic educators argue that a standardised approach to education assumes that each individual has the same abilities and will display these in similar ways. They claim that this approach limits the child’s creativity and does not allow them to reach their full potential. This is echoed in the works of earlier advocates of holistic education such as Krishnamurti (1953:14) who states that “[a]s long as education is based on cut-and-dried principles, it can turn out men and women who are efficient, but it cannot produce creative human beings.”

By acknowledging each child as a unique individual, holistic educators recognise that “different learning styles, multiple ways of knowing, and multiple kinds of intelligence”

are all valid and of equal importance (Rudge, 2008:139). Due to the fact that each child has a unique way of learning and expressing their growth, each child also learns and grows at their own distinct pace and this must be fostered by the teacher. The educational environment is adapted to the individual child, instead of the child being moulded and adapted to suit his/her environment (Kochlar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010:6). The teacher is aware of the fact that each child learns and expresses in their own unique way – instead of suppressing this, the teacher fosters it.

Traditional education not only follows a one-size-fits-all model, but also values performance above everything else. Holistic educators as far back as Rousseau have criticised this model: “Rousseau felt that performance based pedagogy depended on representations and abstractions for its displays, and that such learning was devoid of any emotional engagement on the part of the student” (Forbes, 2012:55). Pupils are trained to impress, be it teachers, parents or other pupils, while holistic educators argue that this has no true value for the pupil as it is purely a display and does not teach the pupil anything about life, nor about moral values, compassion, courage and wisdom.

Forbes (2012:56) writes that Rousseau adamantly insisted that it is not important *how much* knowledge a pupil acquires but rather that he/she can learn to question and reason, and acquire knowledge in this way. He continues Rousseau’s sentiment by adding that “certainly becoming an expert in one subject is harmful to the child’s overall development, and it is this overall development that generates the ability to meet the challenges of living” (Forbes, 2012:56). Being well-versed in intellectual facts only develops one small aspect of the pupil and does not prepare him/her for the varied challenges of life.

It is clear that the principle of *individual uniqueness* is mainly concerned with respecting the individuality of the child and allowing the child to develop at his/her own pace. This means that the education system is child-centred to allow for the child’s creativity to develop alongside other capacities such as intellectual and physical abilities. *Individual uniqueness* also rejects performance-based pedagogy and proposes instead competence-based pedagogy, which involves acquiring knowledge through questioning and exploring and building skills which cannot always be ‘displayed’ as in performance-based pedagogy (Forbes, 2012:55).

### 2.1.6 Caring relations

J.P. Miller (2006:164) and Rudge (2008:144) dedicate the inclusion of and focus on this aspect of holistic education to the work done by Nel Noddings (Noddings, 1984; Noddings, 2003; Noddings, 2005). This principle is central to her work and has had a significant impact on the field of holistic education. Noddings asserts that the “main aim of education should be a moral one, that of nurturing the growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable persons” (Soltis, 2005:ii).

*Caring relations* refers mainly to the work and attitude assumed by the teacher. J.P. Miller (1998:66) explains that “[h]olistic education must rest to a large degree on the wholeness, or loving consciousness of the teacher, since holistic education can never be reduced to a curriculum or a set of teaching strategies.” Following on from the principle of *individual uniqueness* which rejects the concept of a standardised curriculum, the principle of *caring relations* places the responsibility on the teacher to create an environment enabling the child to reach their full potential.

J.P. Miller (1998:67) continues by describing the differences between teachers in a traditional education setting and holistic educators who should aim to have a “21<sup>st</sup> century mind”. Firstly, teachers in mainstream schools tend to compartmentalise subjects, whereas teachers with a holistic approach seek to be as integrative and non-dualistic as possible; furthermore, traditional teachers emphasise details and lose track of the whole, while holistic teachers strive for the opposite. Arguably the most distinct difference is that traditional teachers motivate their pupils through fear, while holistic teaching is motivated by love. (Miller, J.P., 1998:67).

Forbes (2012:32) aptly explains the difference between learning motivated by fear and learning motivated by love: learning mechanically, or what can also be described as ‘training’, can be achieved through fear; but, “for learning that requires internalised understanding, meaning-making, or any kind of creativity, fear cannot be part of the learning process”. Instead of fear, he continues, there should be sincere empathy towards the pupil, and an atmosphere of fondness and warmth should pervade.

Herein lies another major contrast to traditional education: the types of human beings the education system is hoping to send into society. If learning is motivated by fear – fear of punishment, fear of lack of reward, even fear of humiliation – as it is in many

traditional schooling systems, the learning that takes place is simply training, mastery of simple skills with no creativity involved. Thus this form of education aims to shape children to become what one might call ‘worker bees’. But if one desires more than just training from an education system, motivation through fear cannot be present, and must be replaced instead by love and kindness. It is only in this environment of trust that exploring and questioning can take place. This leads to deeper understanding and learning – not merely the memorisation of facts to pass a test – as the knowledge is more meaningful to the child. In this atmosphere children can develop their individual creativity and grow up to become more than just ‘worker bees’, but unique individuals with their own, unique contribution to make to the world. (Forbes, 2012:32).

This sentiment is echoed in the works of the pioneers of holistic education, the most significant of which is the work of 18<sup>th</sup> century Swiss educator Pestalozzi. J.P. Miller (2007:72) explains the educational principles laid out by Pestalozzi, whose “real genius was his empathy for children and how he could adjust his instructional methods to the unique needs of each student”. Due to his focus on empathy on the part of the teacher, Pestalozzi emphasised that the “educator should respect the individuality of the pupil” by always approaching the pupil without judgement or criticism (Miller, 2007:71).

For Pestalozzi, respecting the individuality of the pupil is also linked to what one teaches. Pestalozzi stressed the importance of gradual progression, stating that teachers should always begin with the basic elements of any subject and progress step by step according to the development of the child. This is in contrast to traditional education which decides what the pupil should learn and when. Holistic education recognises that each child develops at their own unique pace and should not be forced to learn something before he/she is able to grasp it completely. (Miller, 2007:73).

Even though the notion of empathy and love towards the pupil might have only gained prominence recently due to the vast amount of work undertaken by Noddings, it has in fact always been considered an important element of education by noteworthy educationalists.

Holistic educators consider the relationship between the teacher and the student as the foundation for “learning, social life and social justice” (Rudge, 2008:150). This is because, as Forbes (2012:31) states, “being treated with affection and empathy by a

person with far greater social power (e.g. a teacher) is also thought of as the way a student learns to similarly treat others with less social power.” According to Ron Miller (cited by Kochlar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010:7), relationships and emotional wellbeing are deemed to be as important as academic subject matter within the holistic education setting. Healthy personal relationships do not only create a feeling of belonging within the child, they also teach qualities of respect, compassion and understanding.

In short, the *caring relations* principle emphasises the important role of the teacher in the overall development of the pupil. If the teacher treats the pupil with empathy and respect, the pupil has room to question and explore, while also learning the value of treating others with empathy and respect.

### **2.1.7 Freedom/autonomy**

This principle is three-fold: it involves inner or spiritual freedom, freedom of the mind and expression as well as freedom of action. This principle is often discussed by contemporary holistic educators such as Ron Miller, but Rudge (2008:160) remarks that it is a more common characteristic of the works of the pioneers and 20<sup>th</sup> century holistic educators.

“Inner freedom is commonly associated with psychological freedom, freedom from destructive conditioning, habits, and opinions” (Rudge, 2008:162). Many pioneers felt that, to become one’s best, one needs to be free of enculturation – education must not condition and train young minds to be a certain way, but instead allow them freedom to become who they truly are, which is not related to one specific culture but is rather more universal.

Abraham Maslow, like many of his predecessors, was outspoken about inner or spiritual freedom. Maslow believed that “education should not be for localized citizenship, but for world citizenship” (Forbes, 2012:164). He is best known for his pyramid of self-actualisation, and believed that an important component of reaching self-actualisation lies in an education that does not propagate certain societal values, but rather allows for “the discovery (by looking within) of values that transcend the individual’s society” (Forbes, 2012:165). Thus we can see that holistic education places high value on

educating children to become unique individuals, instead of moulding them to fit into society.

Freedom of mind involves the child's autonomy in the learning process. Holistic educators believe that the child has an inherent desire to learn, an inherent motivation to discover new things. It is merely the teacher's duty to facilitate this discovery. Forbes (2012:30) notes that many of the pioneers of holistic education agreed that "wanting to learn is so much a part of being human that it forms part of the definition of what it means to be human." But, he adds, they were also all aware of the fact that this inherent desire to learn can either be developed, disregarded, or damaged by education.

Küpers, Van Dijk, McPherson, and Van Geert (2014:19) argue that the desire to learn can be developed (and not damaged) through a process referred to as instructional scaffolding: "a form of teaching where a teacher seeks to promote deeper learning by providing support during the learning process that is tailored to the learner's individual needs". In other words, the teacher tutors the pupil in a way that does not only focus on completing a task, but also on the process that leads to the completion of that task; so that the next time the child endeavours to complete that task they can do it with less input from the teacher. "The learner is seen as an active participant in his or her own learning process" (Küpers *et al.*, 2014:19) and as such has more control over their education, i.e. autonomy in their education.

Creating opportunities for children to have more autonomy in the learning process relates to the third aspect of *freedom/autonomy*, freedom of action, as both aspects involve the sensitivity of the teacher towards the pupil. The teacher should be aware that "stages of development follow a sequence but also proceed at idiosyncratic paces" (Forbes, 2012:29). Each child will enter each stage of development at his/her own time and express that stage in his/her own individual way. That which motivates the child to proceed to the next stage of development is natural and inherent, and should not be accelerated unnaturally, as the natural learning process starts from the simple and instinctively moves to the more complex as a person matures.

In this way the teacher is responsive to the psychological needs of the pupil – these needs include a need for autonomy, competence, as well as relatedness (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, & Barch, 2004:149). The teacher finds ways to engage and fulfil the

pupil's need for autonomy by using “informational, non-controlling language”; the need for competence by inspiring the pupil to be self-motivated and not externally motivated; and the need for relatedness by promoting “value in uninteresting activities and acknowledging and accepting student's expressions of negative affect” (Reeve *et al.*, 2004:151). It is clear that an autonomous environment changes the role of the teacher from one of controller to that of a guide, where the child is allowed to express their true feelings and find their inner motivation to master that which is being taught.

American author John Holt (cited by Miller, R., 2002:96) explains that the lack of autonomy in the learning process actually constrains the learning process:

The main reason for giving young people self-direction, autonomy, and choice in their learning is not so that they will grow up to be revolutionary fighters [...], or preserve some mythical childhood innocence and purity, or know how to live in harmony with nature and the universe, but quite simply because it is how people learn best.

Holt (Miller, R., 2002:96) asserts that human beings learn best when they are in control of the pace of their learning as well as what they learn, and most of all why they are learning. If they are enquiring about something out of their own curiosity, the process is very different compared to learning prescribed material.

Studies have shown that students who are taught in an autonomy-supportive environment have a variety of advantages in comparison to students whose teachers are more controlling. Reeve *et al.* (2004:149) state that it has been proven that these students are more motivated to master a certain skill, respond more positively to information, are more competent at what they do, and have “greater conceptual understanding, higher academic performance, and greater persistence in school (vs. dropping out)”. This proves that incorporating the principle of *freedom/autonomy* can have a significant effect on pupils' motivation, their emotional reactions, their learning ability as well as how successful they are at what they endeavour to do.

### **2.1.8 Democracy**

The principle of *democracy* in holistic education involves what contemporary holistic educators refer to as ‘participatory democracy’ on the one hand, and democratic, equal relationships between the teacher and the student on the other (Rudge, 2008:185).

This principle mainly rejects an authoritarian manner of dealing with matters, and proposes instead a system which encourages all participants to share in the decision making. Ron Miller (cited by Rudge, 2008:185) states that in a democratic education young people are able “to experience or practice meaningful participation in the social institution with which they are most intimately involved”. This means that pupils are encouraged to participate in decisions which affect the school, which will affect their personal learning situation as a result. Ron Miller continues that children learn how to solve problems in collaboration with different types of people (age, race, etc.). (Rudge, 2008:185).

This principle was first highlighted by John Dewey, who was an adamant proponent of democracy in society, starting with democracy in schools. He proposed that schools should be “cooperative communities”, as a way of spreading the ideals of democracy into society at large (Totten & Pederson, 2012:37). This is interpreted by holistic educators who recommend that the student-teacher relationship should consist of mutual respect, in such a way that “teacher and students’ knowledge and experience are valued, cooperation among individuals and groups are facilitated, decisions are shared and everyone is invited to participate” (Rudge, 2008:185). Thus the teacher and students have an equal say in the structure and content of the academic process, in contrast with the authoritarian manner commonly found in traditional schooling.

### **2.1.9 Summary**

The eight principles of holistic education, as identified by Rudge, illustrate the ways in which this philosophy of education seeks to educate all facets of the child. To summarise, I have identified significant key words related to each principle in the table below.

**Table 1: Keywords of the principles of holistic education**

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Keywords</b>
Spirituality	Human and spiritual development; inner transformation; inherent goodness; inherent motivation; self-fulfilment; development of morality; remaining true to oneself; the arts; creativity; imagination.
Reverence for life/nature	Respect for nature; environmental education; cosmic awareness; the arts; ecological awareness.
Interconnectedness	Experiential learning; transdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning; individual's relationship with community; individual's relationship with Earth; unity.
Human wholeness	Balanced education; development of whole child; imagination; experiential learning; learning through senses and emotion; inherent motivation.
Individual uniqueness	Celebration of diversity; reject standardised approach to education; student-teacher relationship; child-centred; multiple means of expression, understanding, learning; competence-based pedagogy.
Caring relations	Love; respect; trust; empathy; foundation of learning, social life and social justice; role of teachers and parents; authentic self; moral education; training vs. internalised understanding and creativity. 21 <sup>st</sup> century mind: integrative, focus on whole, motivated by love not fear.
Freedom/autonomy	Inner freedom; freedom of mind and expression; instructional scaffolding; freedom of action; independence; inherent motivation; teacher's autonomy; freedom from consumerist values.
Democracy	'Participatory democracy'; 'partnership education'; egalitarian relationships.

## **2.2 THE BACKGROUND TO THE COLOURSTRINGS VIOLIN APPROACH AND ITS GOALS AS VIOLIN PEDAGOGY**

In this section I will explore the background to the Colourstrings approach: the principles on which it is based as well as the various aims of the approach. Holistic education in music education will be explored through a discussion of the Kodály concept, as well as the main principles thereof.

As Géza Szilvay was born and raised in Hungary, he was fortunate enough to go through the music education system as set up by Zoltán Kodály. He found that this was an exceptionally thorough music education system which addressed all aspects of learning music, and did not solely focus on the technical aspects of learning an instrument. (Colourstrings Australia, 2010).

Szilvay (2005:141) asserts that:

My desire was to create a child-centred violin tutor book which nevertheless met the expectations set by Zoltán Kodály: harmonious and constant equilibrium between the development of musical hearing, instrumental technique, music theory and emotion.

As the Colourstrings approach is based on the music education method laid out by Kodály, an examination of the Kodály method will now follow.

### **2.2.1 Holistic education in music education: Zoltán Kodály**

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) was a Hungarian music educator, composer and ethnomusicologist who radically transformed Hungarian music education (Houlahan & Tacka, 2015:15). Kodály found that many advanced Hungarian music students could not sing what they were playing even though they were technically proficient at their instrument. He also worked extensively with children's choirs, and was astonished at the low level of singing ability. (Björkman 2011:11).

Thus Kodály realised that music education in Hungary was not thorough enough and was in need of transformation (Mark & Madura, 2014:106). He recognised that there was the need for a more systematic approach to music education which was founded on singing and used only high quality music materials, even for the very young (Houlahan

& Tacka, 2015:16). As I have stated elsewhere (Björkman, 2011:11), he began teaching children to sing on solfège before they play and saw that sight-reading, rhythm and musicality improved significantly. This was as a result of the rhythm and melody being internalised before being played on the external instrument.

Kodály believed that “singing is the best foundation for musicianship” (Mark & Madura, 2014:108) as the music is internalised. Houlahan and Tacka (2015:22) explain that “[s]inging requires the rapid internalisation of sound and provides immediate participation in the musical experience.” Once a tune has been sung, it is much easier to play as the music is not external on the sheet music but has become part of the child. He published an array of songbooks which now form the basis of what is called the Kodály concept or method. This is a holistic method which involves as many senses as possible in educating the child musically, the main features of which are singing, clapping and kinaesthetic movement – solfège hand signs – to develop musicality and musical literacy (note reading) as a foundation for any instrumental learning. (Mark & Madura, 2014:108).

Developing a good ear through singing is the first and most imperative characteristic of a good musician, which Kodály (cited by Houlahan & Tacka, 2015:18) states must be combined with a “well-trained intelligence and a well-trained heart”. The fourth characteristic is a “well-trained hand”, i.e. technical proficiency at an instrument. Thus it is clear that Kodály believed that one can only truly become a well-rounded musician if one develops all of these characteristics, and focusing only on one side – for example the technical side of an instrument – would not yield the same result.

I will now briefly highlight important concepts of Kodály’s philosophy of music education through a discussion of his method which is now used all around the world.

### **The Kodály Concept**

The Kodály concept uses rhythm syllables, the solfège system and solfège hand signs to teach children to read and write music, to develop good intonation as well improvisation and listening skills. This is all achieved by using folksongs from the pupil’s own culture which “constitute a musical ‘mother tongue’ and should therefore be the vehicle for all early instruction” (Mark & Madura, 2014:108).

Kodály was a passionate nationalist and spent a large part of his life researching and arranging folk songs which later formed part of his method. He believed that only music of excellent artistic value should be used in music education and thus also re-arranged folksong arrangements which he found to be musically lacking. He found that folksongs make music education more accessible to young children – he believed that music education must begin at the youngest possible age. He is known for famously saying that music education should begin “nine months before the birth of the mother” (cited by Miller & Miller, 2013:489).

The Kodály method lays the foundation for instrumental training, and takes place away from the instrument, *before* the child chooses which instrument they would like to learn to play. Kodály adapted the French rhythm syllable system which uses TA for crotchets and TI for quavers: children say and clap these rhythm names, as well as feel the pulse by walking it and playing various rhythm games. Hereafter they progress to writing simple rhythm notation using stick notation which gradually incorporates more complicated rhythms. “As rhythm experiences become more complex, students develop both increasingly acute sensitivity to rhythm and beat and skill in rhythm reading” (Mark & Madura, 2014:109). This lays the foundations for ease of sight-reading once an instrument is learnt.

Kodály also used the tonic solfège system which is based on the principle of movable DO (Mark & Madura, 2014:110). Children learn to sing and recognise intervals in a meticulous programme: Firstly, only songs using SO-MI are used, as Kodály realised that this is the most natural interval for children to sing. Children sing folksongs which use this interval, then learn the solfège names for the notes, and thirdly use hand signs for the intervals. Kodály believed that “learning to sight-read through a medium other than the voice improves musical reading skills” (Mark & Madura, 2014:110). Using hand signs adds the kinaesthetic learning element to the process, deepening the learning process. In this way children learn through more than one sense: using the voice as well as bodily motion simultaneously.

Once the first interval of SO-MI is mastered the LA (sixth note of the scale) is added, where after DO, and then RE is added. As Kodály knew that semitones are more difficult for children to sing than whole tones, songs containing FA and TI are introduced last. Each time a new interval is introduced they follow the same process as

described above: once the pupils know the song well, they learn the song with solfège names and hand signs. The fourth step of the process, when children are around 5 years old, involves notating the solfège names on the staff. (Keene, 2010:383).

Kodály believed that anyone who could learn to read words could learn to become musically literate (Mark & Madura, 2014:110). Through using his method Kodály's ultimate goal of absolute mastery of musical literacy can be reached: fluent and ease of sight reading, excellent intonation, and internalised musicality.

Mastering musical literacy was not only important to Kodály in order to become a good musician; he firmly believed that all human beings should receive quality music education in order to become a well-rounded human being. He propagated the advantages of music as a whole, and here describes the different aspects of music which also serve to educate a child:

Taken separately, too, the elements of music are precious instruments in education. Rhythm develops attention, concentration, determination and the ability to condition oneself. Melody opens up the world of emotions. Dynamic variation and tone colour sharpen our hearing. Singing, finally, is such a many-sided physical activity that its effect in physical education is immeasurable – if there is perhaps anyone to whom the education of the spirit does not matter. Its beneficial effect in health is well-known; special books have been written on this. – Zoltán Kodály (cited by Houlahan & Tacka, 2015:19).

It is evident that in his efforts to create a system of music education which aims to give the child a holistic *music* education, Kodály was aware of the fact that a holistic music education was in fact a holistic education – which educates all aspects of the child.

### **2.2.2 The Colourstrings approach as a translation of the Kodály philosophy**

The Colourstrings violin approach is a translation of the Kodály philosophy, as it, too, aims to make “singing, hearing, playing, reading and understanding inseparable” (Szilvay, 2005:141) just as Kodály proposed. Szilvay translates the Kodály concept onto the violin by simplifying the staff system and also trying to “eliminate or at least reduce those instrumental, technical, musical and theoretical difficulties and hardships that so often spoil and render unhappy the early years of violin playing” (Colourstrings Minifiddlers, 2015).

The Colourstrings approach also uses solfège, rhythm syllables, solfège hand-signs and folksongs, in the way that the Kodály concept does, as described above. This takes place as pre-instrumental training, known as Colourstrings Music Kindergarten – for children under the age of 6 – as well as during individual and group violin lessons. (Voima, 2009:10).

### **2.2.2.1 A brief background of Géza Szilvay**

Géza Szilvay (1943- ) was born in Hungary and started the violin at the age of 5. In 1966 Szilvay completed his music degree and went on to do a doctorate in law. He soon became frustrated with the law profession as he states that the “values of law are ever-changing, but the values of the arts are everlasting” (Colourstrings Australia, 2010).

After winning a national talent competition with his family quartet, Szilvay received a bursary for postgraduate study at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. In order to supplement his income he had to teach at local primary schools. (Colourstrings Australia 2010). “Szilvay had to teach 68 five to eight year olds but could not speak a word of Finnish” (Björkman, 2011:10). As he could not communicate through language he communicated visually – by presenting all the musical concepts and musical grammar through pictures, while employing the knowledge he had of the Kodály method to find various ways for the children to use as many senses as possible in the learning process. If his pupils were to merely imitate the way he played the violin that which they learnt would remain superficial and would not be internalised – so he knew that he needed to find a different way of connecting with his pupils. (Colourstrings Australia, 2010).

Music literacy is a vital part of learning music and should be developed from the very beginning. Szilvay notes that this does slow down the process of learning in the beginning, but “sight connects the brain and raises the child’s artisanship to an intellectual level. Knowledge that is achieved through more than one sense is deeper and more long lasting” (Colourstrings Minifiddlers, 2015).

Keeping the Kodály philosophy of musicianship training in mind, Szilvay developed a violin approach which aims to educate the whole child. The main principles of the Colourstrings violin approach will be discussed below.

### 2.2.2.2 Principles of the Colourstrings violin approach

Voima (2009:2) describes Szilvay's holistic approach to violin pedagogy:

Szilvay is a strong believer in the principles of the Kodály system emphasizing the holistic musical development of the child. To Szilvay violin teaching should not merely focus on physical movement but become an intellectual and artistic activity.

Musicianship training means developing well-rounded musicians as well as human beings. The Kodály philosophy focuses on developing well-rounded musicians away from the instrument, while Szilvay combines the Kodály approach with instrumental training to produce well-rounded violinists. The following principles are the ways in which Szilvay has translated the Kodály philosophy into a well-rounded training for the violin.

- **Singing, clapping, and hand-signs**

The Colourstrings approach employs solfège singing, French rhythm names, and solfège hand-signs to make sure the music that the children learn is internalised and they do not learn through mere imitation. Pupils sing the piece before they play it; songs are sung using the words, then on solfège as well as with the French rhythm names. This develops the inner ear and sense of pulse and rhythm while also improving intonation, phrasing and musicality. (Björkman, 2011:11).

Rhythm is experienced “as a physical motion and sensation” (Mitchell, 1994:29) when rhythms are clapped and the pulse walked. Szilvay, like Kodály, aims to involve more than two senses at a time when learning music, as this ensures the internalisation of music. “Clapping rhythms employs the kinaesthetic sense, reading coloured notation the visual sense and singing on solfège the aural sense” (Björkman, 2011:12).

- **Mother-tongue principle**

Many of the songs that are learnt in the violin books can be found in the ‘Singing Rascals’ and ‘Rhythm Rascals’ books, which form part of the Colourstrings Music Kindergarten repertoire. This is pre-instrumental training that takes place in group format from the age of 18 months to 5 years old, before the child goes to primary school. Children learn to sing on solfège, clap French rhythm names, and also write

stick notation. This uses folksongs from around the world, as well as those specific to the child's culture. (The Szilvay Foundation, 2014).

The Singing and Rhythm 'Rascals' songs have also been recorded on CD. The children then later learn to play these songs on the violin as well, as they feature prominently in all the books as well as the supplementary material. This serves as the Colourstrings manifestation of Kodály's adamant declaration that music education should begin as early as possible.

#### ▪ **Chamber music**

Szilvay advocates that violin students have one individual lesson as well as a group lesson every week (Björkman 2011:12). In group lessons pupils learn to listen and respond from an early age, preparing them for early chamber music. This facet of teaching is very important in the Colourstrings philosophy, as early group lessons evolve into ensemble playing – duets, pieces with piano, as well as small string ensembles – and eventually orchestral playing. This is highly beneficial to the pupils as “involvement in chamber music develops the child's sense of blending with others, and the sensitivity to, and awareness of, other musical lines besides their own” (Mitchell, 1994:73).

#### ▪ **Musical literacy**

Szilvay and Kodály were both adamant that musical literacy and technical proficiency must be developed simultaneously. In this way pupils are able to play chamber music from a very young age which makes involvement in music that much more enjoyable.

Szilvay simplifies the staff system to make it more accessible to young children. Szilvay maintains that children are more responsive to colours than to plain black, and the use of colours stimulates and maintains interest which makes the learning process “easier, more enjoyable, deep and long-lasting” (Szilvay, 2005:1).

The strings are introduced as colourful images, which then become colourful lines, each representing a string. Szilvay (2005:2) refers to this as the “child-friendly staff system” as it starts with no staff, and gradually develops into a one-line then two-line staff system, until children are eventually fluent at reading standard musical notation.

The Colourstrings approach also incorporates Kodály's use of stick notation in the Colourstrings Music Kindergarten programme as well as the violin books. This is accompanied by visual representation of all musical concepts: "Rhythm, pitch, intervals and other elements of musical grammar are introduced and explained visually. These pictures and illustrations bring complex musical ideas within the child's sphere of understanding" (Szilvay, 2005:1).

- **Holistic approach**

In the same way that Kodály believed that good music education results in a better-rounded human being, so too does Szilvay aim to educate the pupil as a whole. This is achieved by using as many senses as possible – as mentioned before – through reinforcement. Any new element is learnt through various senses: firstly by singing and clapping, which involves two senses, and then finding various ways of playing the same piece – such as right hand pizzicato, left hand pizzicato, arco (playing with the bow), in a group, question and answer etc. In this way the whole child is involved in the activity as "what is perceived simultaneously by two or more senses leaves the deepest and most lasting impression" (Szilvay, 2005:2). It is important to note that this does not mean repetition for the sake of repetition, but rather revision of an activity in a new and interesting way, teaching a different skill with each repetition.

This illustrates another important aspect of the Colourstrings philosophy: going from the known to the unknown. By repeating the same activity in different ways, the teacher takes that which is known, for example a song, and incorporates it into an unknown activity, for example a new fingering on the violin. Only one new component is introduced at a time, but as it is reinforced in various ways it is thoroughly understood. (Szilvay, 2005:2).

- **Critical thinking skills and creativity**

Critical thinking skills and creativity are developed through continuous transposition and composition in the lessons. Composing and transposing form part of what may be referred to as 'practical theory': where theory is not separated from playing, it is practical – learnt *on* the instrument not away from it – which makes it more relevant to instrumental playing and thus easier to understand. This means that children often play

what they have written, or write what they hear, thus connecting the theoretical and practical part instead of separating the two aspects. (Björkman, 2011:12).

## 2.3 CONCLUSION

From this chapter it is evident that the principles of the philosophies of holistic education as well as the Colourstrings approach are multi-faceted. It is important to note that holistic education should be viewed as a way of thinking rather than a set method or technique. The exploration of the philosophy of holistic education revealed that it cannot be narrowly defined and was thus described by employing eight main principles as identified by Rudge (2008). These principles have been present in the literature of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century pioneers of education, 20<sup>th</sup> century holistic educators as well as contemporary holistic educators – although they often employ differing terminology. The researcher has found that the principles of *interconnectedness* and *human wholeness* serve as the corner stones of the philosophy of holistic education. Keywords identified in table 2 summarise the discussion of the philosophy of holistic education.

Holistic education in music education is epitomised by the Kodály concept. Colourstrings is based on this concept and as a result the principles include: singing, clapping and solfège hand signs; the mother-tongue principle; emphasis on chamber music; as well as the development of critical thinking and creativity skills in order to create a child-centred violin approach which aims to educate the whole child.

This literature review should give the reader more insight into these layered philosophies. An analysis of the pedagogical material of the Colourstrings approach will now follow.

## CHAPTER 3

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### *Research design and methodology*

In this chapter I will describe the methodology I used for this thesis. This is a descriptive study separated into two parts: firstly, a literature review as found in Chapter 2, and secondly a critical reading of existing Colourstrings violin pedagogy literature. This critical reading will take the form of a qualitative research method known as document analysis.

#### **3.1 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS AS RESEARCH METHOD**

Bowen (2009:29) finds that “as a research method, document analysis is particularly applicable to qualitative case studies – intensive studies producing rich descriptions of a single phenomenon, event, organisation, or programme”. Bowen continues by stating that documents which qualify for document analysis range from advertisements, to books and brochures, diaries and journals, programme proposals and summaries, amongst others.

The documents that I will analyse consist of the Colourstrings ABC Handbook for Teachers and Parents, the Colourstrings Violin School Volumes A-D, as well as my personal notes from two Colourstrings violin courses<sup>3</sup> I have attended in South Africa. My personal notes fall into the category of journals or diaries, and may also be viewed as a type of summary of the courses – and are thus suitable for document analysis.

I will now give a brief overview of each of the documents used for analysis. An analysis of the Handbook for Teachers and Parents as well as my personal notes will be incorporated in an in-depth discussion of Violin Books A-D.

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<sup>3</sup> These violin courses were public workshops which took place in April 2014 and 2015. The first took place at Crawford College Lonehill, in Midrand and the second at Waterkloof House Preparatory School in Pretoria.

## 3.2 OVERVIEW OF DOCUMENTS USED FOR ANALYSIS

**The Handbook for Teachers and Parents** was originally written by Géza Szilvay in Finnish, and later translated into English with the help of various British Colourstrings pedagogues. This handbook discusses the Colourstrings violin approach from before the very first lesson – buying the correct size violin, how to maintain the violin etc. – through a detailed discussion of books A-F, as well as instructions on how to teach using the Colourstrings Yellow Pages (complementary material to books E and F). The Handbook is ended by “Some final words” by Szilvay (2005:141) about the origin and nature of the approach.

**The Colourstrings Violin School Volumes A-D** form the foundation of the Colourstrings violin approach as they were the first books written by Szilvay for the violin. These books are aimed at teaching young children to play the violin, usually aged between six and eight years. Szilvay (2005:141) states that these books have been “a work in progress for over thirty years”, a period of which he has expanded this material vastly: there are now Books E and F which can be used to follow book D for more advanced pupils; a host of supplementary solo and chamber music material which complement Books A-F; as well as pre-instrumental material for kindergarten-age pupils which introduces the songs used in Books A-D through stories, games and CD recordings. I will focus mainly on Books A-D as they epitomise the Colourstrings philosophy: they are the only books in the range that are purely in colour (except for the last half of book D which slowly phases out the use of colour), and follow the holistic principle of going from the known to the unknown.

**My personal notes** consist of short, concise notes I took while attending the Colourstrings violin courses in 2014 and 2015. During the courses the instructor, Yvonne Frye, went through a detailed explanation of books A-D and also touched on the complementary chamber music material, as well as books E and F and the Colourstrings Yellow Pages material. I found these courses helpful in gaining insight and understanding of the Colourstrings approach; most of what is presented in the course is not explained as thoroughly in the Handbook for Teachers and Parents as it is at the course.

It must be noted that the process of becoming a qualified Colourstrings violin teacher asks a certain dedication of the teacher: The training consists of four courses, and between each course the teacher has to have a year of teaching experience to implement what they have learnt – thus it is not possible to do all four courses consecutively. It is also recommended to do more than just the required four courses, as the Colourstrings approach is so multi-faceted that it is easy to forget some of the aspects if one does not regularly attend a course.

In an email correspondence with Frye (2015), she states that

The Colourstrings method is a very innovative and complex way of teaching the violin to little children. It uses a lot of symbols and images. The work with the pupils is a very manual [i.e. ‘hands on’] way of teaching. The teacher is constantly moulding the right and left hand of the child. In order to understand and feel the way this moulding is done, workshops given by certified Colourstrings tutors are an essential part of learning how to teach with the method.

In these courses, the participants are learning which positions to use with the child to mould a good bow hand and a good stopping position of the left hand. Teachers learn how to support the child’s body when teaching complex movements like vibrato, shifting, different bowing etc. The participants themselves work manually with each other to learn how to help their pupils in a practical way.

To teach with Colourstrings just from the books and without a course is not recommended as many contents (for example learning how to guide the bow in the correct way) have to be experienced in practice and not just in theory.

This having been said, one does not have to be a fully qualified Colourstrings teacher to use the books – the approach can be incorporated into other methods as it is very flexible. By attending courses one learns more about the techniques and the reason why the books are written as they are, and with this insight it is easier to employ the method, whether it is on its own or in conjunction with other violin methods.

Below is a graph of the structure of Colourstrings pedagogy materials (Figure 1). It shows how the Colourstrings music education programme begins with pre-instrumental training in the music kindergarten as well as where the complementary material fits in with the foundation of books A-F.

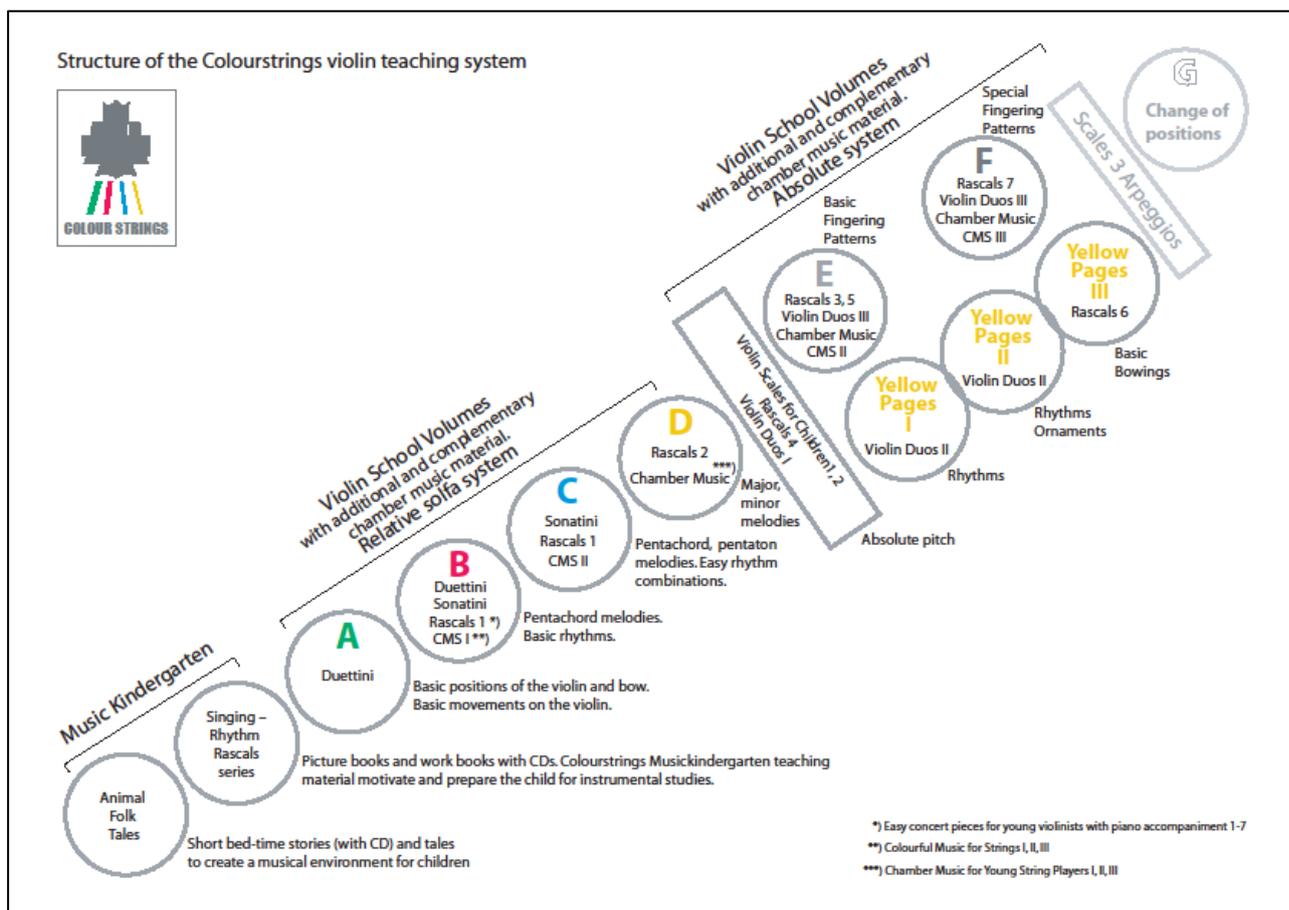


Figure 1: Structure of the Colourstrings violin method. Source: [www.colourstrings.fi](http://www.colourstrings.fi)

With this overview in mind, I will now proceed with a detailed discussion of these documents.

### 3.2.1 Foreword to the Handbook for Teachers and Parents

The Handbook starts with a Foreword which states that music should be a right for every child. It explains how the Colourstrings violin approach connects to the Colourstrings Music Kindergarten by incorporating the same nursery rhymes, songs, fairy tales and pictures.

Special features of the Colourstrings violin books are highlighted (Szilvay, 2005:1-3):

- **Colours** – which “awaken and maintain interest and make the learning process easier, more enjoyable, deep and long-lasting.”

- **Visual Presentation** – by explaining various elements of music such as rhythm and intervals visually, complicated and often difficult elements of music are taught to the child in a language that they can understand.
- **Rhythms** – early rhythm exercises only contain crotchets, quavers, minims, and crotchet rests. The Handbook explains that “the complete, rich repertoire of more complicated rhythms is introduced gradually, step by step”.
- **Melodies** – melodic intervals are introduced in the same way as the rhythms: starting with the simple (two-note songs) and gradually moving to the complex.
- **Form** – “the melodies are short, so that the form can easily be absorbed, mastered and learned by heart.”
- **Singing** – Szilvay insists that everything that is going to be played should first be sung with words, solfège, or rhythm names. He also encourages pupils and teachers to make up their own words to songs if they so wish.
- **Instrumental technique** – “In the history of violin teaching, Colourstrings is the first method to use natural harmonics in a systematic way to develop the beginner’s technique.” Furthermore, left-hand pizzicato features prominently from the very first lesson, which is also a unique feature of the Colourstrings violin approach.
- **Integrated teaching** – Szilvay explains how violin technique, “musical hearing” (singing solfège), “musical intellect (theory)” and emotional development should constantly be balanced by being taught simultaneously in an integrated manner. Although the integration of different facets of music is important, he adds that the Colourstrings books take care to only introduce one new element – of either violin technique, theory, or musicality – at a time.
- **Joint functioning of the senses** – each new component of music which is introduced is taught through “the principle of reinforcement of perception”. When something is experienced through more than one sense it is more easily remembered as it is internalised.
- **Child-friendly stave system** – music notation is introduced first with no stave, and gradually evolves into a one-line then two-line stave, eventually reaching the standard five-line stave. Szilvay argues that this does not delay music literacy but rather improves it, as “the colours, visual representations and simplified stave

systems are never in contradiction to conventional notation: rather, they grow naturally into it in an ‘organic’ way.”

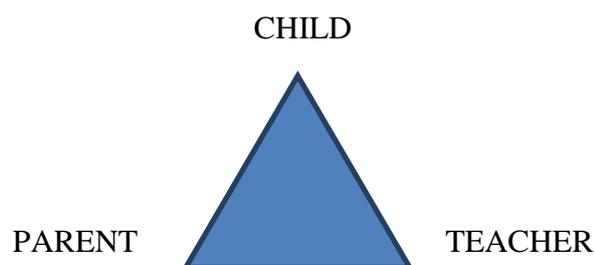
- **Relative solfège** – Colourstrings employs the tonic solfège system which uses a movable DO. This makes transposition easy and thus helps pupils to get comfortable with the whole fingerboard from the very beginning. Letter names are used only from Book C onwards, before which relative solfège “actually enables a far greater freedom, both technically and musically”.
- **Mother-tongue principle** – the Colourstrings violin books contain many open pages for the teacher and pupil to write down songs from their own cultural heritage. Szilvay states that this principle, adopted from the Kodály concept, also encourages the teacher to adapt the Colourstrings approach to the unique needs of their location as well as the needs of each specific child.
- **Creativity** – the blank pages at the end of each section encourage the child to become actively involved in all aspects of music making, through “colouring, copying, composing, transposing, transforming [and] improvising”.
- **Group teaching** – Szilvay states that the books are firstly designed for teaching pupils individually, but “group teaching alongside the individual lessons makes a valuable addition”. The Colourstrings books are thus constructed in such a way that they can be used for group teaching too.
- **Chamber music** – “Group teaching develops naturally into playing chamber music together.” Books A-D can be used for group teaching, and there is a variety of supplementary chamber music materials which can also be used.
- **Repetition** – the books are not only to be followed from one page to the next, but with continuous revision. Revision is done with the focus on improvement, adding something new each time, such as “learning to play by heart, with dynamics, in transposition, and with different tone colours”.

The Handbook for Teachers and Parents continues with a detailed, page by page discussion of Violin Book A.

### 3.2.2 Introduction of personal notes

At the first violin course that I attended in 2014, Yvonne Frye (Björkman, 2014) started the course by explaining that the Colourstrings approach aims to give the child what she calls a “musical parcel”. This consists not only of excellent technical skills on the violin, but also a well-trained ear, a deep intellectual understanding of music, tools for expression, as well as opportunities for solo and chamber music activities (Björkman, 2014).

She explained that the Colourstrings approach aims to be “child-centred without being childish” (Björkman, 2014) as it speaks to the child in a language they can understand without over simplifying elements of music. Frye described how the Colourstrings method progresses, by first teaching concepts in an unconscious way, then gradually making concepts semi-conscious, until eventually the child is ready to grasp concepts fully and consciously. For example, strings are referred to by the characters associated with them in the beginning (unconscious stage), and gradually the teacher ‘smuggles’ in the note names of the strings (semi-conscious stage) until eventually the child is consciously taught the note names of all the notes in the beginning of Book C (conscious stage). This will be further illustrated during the analysis of the books. Frye also highlighted the importance of parental involvement in music lessons, explaining it as a triangle (Figure 2):



**Figure 2: Importance of parental and teacher support. (Björkman, 2014).**

For the child to be successful at music they need to be supported by both the teacher and the parent. If one vertex of the triangle does not participate it is almost impossible for the child to be successful and gain enjoyment from learning an instrument. For this reason it is important to have an interview with the parents before the first lesson, to explain that daily practise is essential for music training. The teacher must also find out which other extra-curricular activities the child is involved in, if their schedule is too

full it might be an indication that the violin is not the right activity for them at the moment as they will not have time to practise.

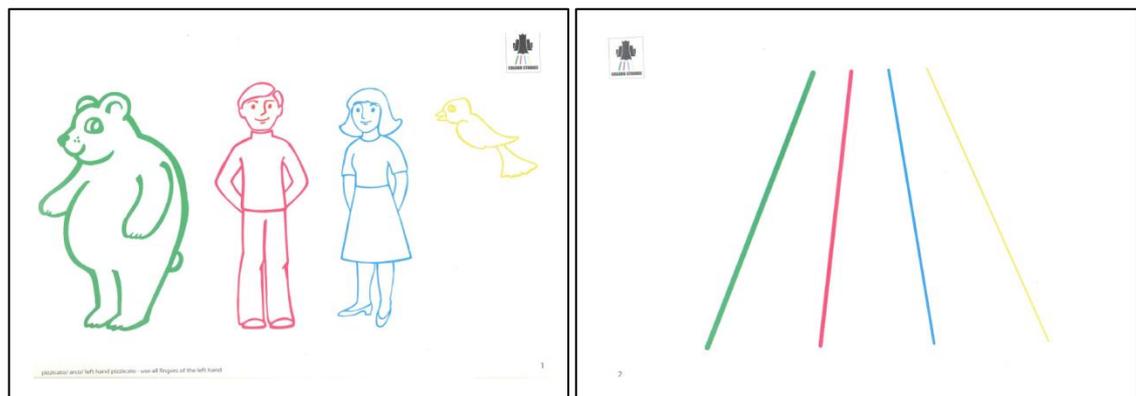
I will now continue by examining the Violin Books A-D as discussed in the Handbook for Teachers and Parents and the violin courses. Each page of the Violin Books ABC will firstly be illuminated by what is written in the Handbook by Szilvay, followed by what was learnt in the violin courses.

### 3.3 VIOLIN BOOK A

#### 3.3.1 Chapter 1: Developing the basic holds, basic movements and basic rhythms on open strings

##### Page 1

The first page of Book A introduces the four characters associated with the four strings (Figure 3): the green bear for the G string, a red 'daddy' for the D string, a blue 'mommy' for A string, and a yellow bird for the E string. The Handbook explains that these pictures introduce the pupil to the different pitches of the strings, and should be played with right hand pizzicato, left hand pizzicato and arco (with the bow).



**Figure 3: Book A, page 1 and 2. The four strings are introduced as characters.**

The Handbook also explains another version of left hand pizzicato – traditionally only the little finger is used for left hand pizzicato – but Szilvay employs what he calls ‘numbered pizzicato’ which uses a different finger for each string to develop

independence and dexterity of the fingers from the very beginning. Szilvay explains that the bow should be guided by the teacher in the beginning. The Handbook continues with a detailed description of how the violin should be held by the pupil.

Yvonne Frye (Björkman, 2014) explained that the child must become used to the correct way of holding the violin, while at the same time the teacher must be aware of reducing any tension in the child. For this reason she advocates placing the violin in the correct position, letting the pupil play a little and then removing the violin. She recommends doing this often, so that the pupil does not develop tension by holding the violin for an extended period of time, and the violin then falling into the wrong position as a result of the tension in the neck or shoulders.

She also explained that the first page with the pictures should be brought alive by the teacher through stories. The teacher can make up stories about the characters as the child plays, and encourage the child to also make up stories. In this way the imagination and emotional world of the child is immediately involved, and the pupil will remember what they have learnt much easier. Frye (Björkman, 2015) exclaimed that “the first lesson should be magical!”

Frye laid great emphasis on the importance of guiding the bow and spent a great deal of time explaining this concept to the teachers at the course as well as letting them experience how to guide the bow. Guiding the bow takes place from the very first lesson until about six months into the first year of learning the violin, when the teacher has found that there is no tension in the bow arm or shoulder. She showed participants of the course how to guide the bow in such a way that the child is still actively participating. Learning how to guide a student’s bow is just one of the many vital activities which are mentioned in the Handbook but which a teacher cannot learn to do properly without attending a course.

## **Page 2**

Page 2 of Book A (see Figure 3) introduces the strings as coloured lines “to guide the child into the more abstract world of violin playing” (Szilvay, 2005:8). Once again the pupil should play different rhythms on the strings with right hand pizzicato, left hand pizzicato, numbered pizzicato and arco. This is often repeated in Book A and will from

now on be referred to as playing it in the four different ways. Szilvay notes that all exercises should be played in many different ways, not at a moderate tempo and moderate dynamic, but aiming to go to extreme tempi and dynamics.

### **Page 3**

Page 3 of Book A introduces the beginning of stick notation, with lines representing crotchet notes. “In this way the children are given a visual image of the note’s length (which is particularly important while practising pizzicato)” (Szilvay, 2005:8). Szilvay employs the French rhythm names, TA for crotchets and TI for quavers. The exercises should again be played in the four different ways at different tempi and dynamics. To add another variation, the pupil may alternate playing four notes with right hand pizzicato and four notes with left hand pizzicato.

Frye explained how one can already practise reading ahead – a vital sight reading skill – by asking the pupil to play the beginning of one line, then pointing to another line at any time. This way the pupil must always look ahead to see which note they must play next.

On page 3 one can already introduce the first octave harmonic – only with guided bowing to begin with. Frye emphasised that this activity must be magical for the child: stimulate the child’s imagination by explaining that they are about to play a very special note, the “magic note” (Björkman, 2014). The unique and hazy sound of the harmonic will awaken interest and enthusiasm in the young pupil.

### **Page 4**

Up to now each exercise has only contained crotchet notes on one string; page 4 introduces early string crossing by incorporating neighbouring strings into each exercise. This should also be played in the four different ways at different tempi and dynamics.

### Page 5

Page 5 of Book A introduces shorter lines which represent quaver notes (Figure 4). These should be played in the four different ways at different tempi and dynamics, as well as alternating left and right hand involvement.

Frye explained how one can introduce inner hearing exercises to develop the pupil's sense of pulse. This may take place in individual as well as group lessons. Inner hearing exercises involve using a metaphor such as 'turning down the volume', where the child plays/sings/claps the exercise and when the teacher shows that she is turning down the volume, the music continues silently. When the teacher shows that she turns the volume up again, the child plays/sings/claps, not where he/she stopped playing, but where the music would be if the volume had not been turned down.



**Figure 4: Book A, page 5. Longer lines symbolise crotchet notes and shorter lines quaver notes.**

### Page 6

Page 6 now combines crotchet and quaver lines with string crossing for the first time. This should be played in the four different ways, as well as alternating left and right hand pizzicato, while always using interesting tempi and dynamics.

Frye adds that one should make the child aware of the form of the piece from the very beginning, even if the piece is a simple one line open string melody. One can ask the child ‘where do certain elements of the music repeat?’ ‘How can we make this repetition interesting through dynamics?’ She also states that the child can be made conscious of ‘up phrasing’ at the end of each piece.

### **Page 7**

Page 7 is one of the most important pages in Book A and may be returned to many times. Szilvay gives a detailed explanation of how to teach this page. He begins by explaining that, although teachers already know which way is up and down on the fingerboard as it correlates with the pitch, this might not be clear to the child: up is a movement towards the body, and down is away from the body. “These descriptions [...] are not natural to the children and therefore should be visualised, explained and taught” (Szilvay, 2005:10).

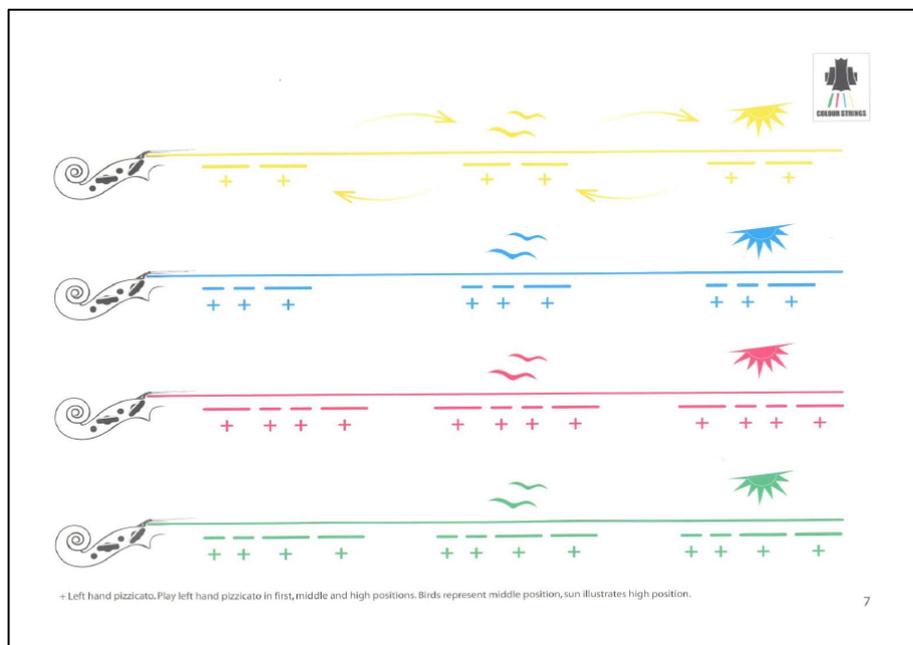
This page employs left hand pizzicato to get the left hand moving all over the fingerboard of the violin. This is unique to the Colourstrings approach as traditional violin schools stay in first position for at least the first year of violin lessons, if not longer. This page is taught in the second or third lesson and “through these longitudinal movements, flexibility of the thumb will be increased and relaxation of the left hand developed [while] mastery of the length of the fingerboard (future change of position) is given an early start” (Szilvay, 2005:10).

Frye expounds on Szilvay’s foundation by incorporating the same reading ahead exercise as referred to earlier. It is important to note that all these varieties of playing the same exercise are not necessarily done on each and every exercise each and every time. As explained in Szilvay’s introduction to the Handbook, the Violin Books ABC should be continuously revised, each time returning to an exercise with the aim of improving it. For example, page 7 might only be played with left hand pizzicato the first couple of times. Once the pupil has become accustomed to the new movement of moving up and down the fingerboard, numbered pizzicato might be added. Then other exercises might be played for a while, and when the teacher returns to this page, they

might do the reading ahead exercise: the teacher pointing at random notes and the pupil playing those, instead of in one steady line.

Frye engages the child's imagination by creating a story around the activity, explaining how the bottom part by the scroll is the garden, then the hand flies up to the birds, and even higher to the sun. In this way, one is subconsciously making the child aware which way is higher and lower. (Björkman 2015:2).

Figure 5 illustrates the description of page 7: The plus sign under the notes indicate left hand pizzicato (a sign used in all violin repertoire); the pupil plucks up and down the fingerboard as an introduction to position changing and becoming comfortable all over the violin.



**Figure 5: Violin Book A, page 7. Introducing movements up and down the fingerboard.**

### Pages 8 & 9

These pages introduce stick notation for the first time, which Szilvay refers to as pipe writing. These pages must be practised in various ways, reciting rhythm names, clapping, playing all four different ways (pizzicato, arco etc.) and alternating right and left hand, as well as with varying tempi and dynamics.

**Pages 10 & 11**

These pages present a rhythm duet which involves the TA stick notation learnt on the previous pages; one child plays open E string and the other the open G string. Each time a new rhythm is introduced it is followed by a rhythm duo which can be used in group teaching and individual lessons. Szilvay adds that parents can also clap one part and the pupil play the other when practising at home, or the pupil can pluck the E string and play the G string with the bow. This is after it has been played in the four different ways.

Frye notes that this is the beginning of chamber music playing: The pupil has to play their own part as well as follow where the other is playing, always listening. She states that the child playing the G string should start in an original tempo, and the other child playing the E string should respond accordingly. Or the child playing the first part chooses the type of character they would like to play in (sad, happy etc.) and the second part has to listen and respond in the same character. Also at the end pupils should look at each other to end together, just as one would in an ensemble or orchestra. (Björkman, 2014).

Rhythm duos present new rhythms on pages 16-17, 22-23, 26-27 and would be taught in the same way.

**Pages 12, 13 & 14**

Now name associations are made with the crotchet and quaver rhythms that have been learnt. “For very young children, it is useful to associate the newly-learned rhythms with names and to recite the exercises before playing” (Szilvay, 2005:12). Children insert their own names, or siblings and friends names into different rhythm combinations. Szilvay also recommends that the teacher not use the names ‘crotchet and quaver’ for young children, but rather the French rhythm names TA and TI which describe the length of the note aurally. Once the names have been recited and clapped, they are played in the four different ways.

**Page 15**

The difference in speed of bow stroke necessary for crotchet and quaver rhythms is visually explained using a car for TA and a train for TI. This is a visual presentation to make the pupil aware of the different bow speeds necessary for different rhythms without intellectualising the concept of bow speed. Szilvay and Frye both recommend that the teacher make the child aware of bow speed and not bow division, which is only introduced in Book C.

**Pages 18 & 19**

These pages invite the child to colour in the speed symbols (car and train) as well as draw the stick notation for the relevant speed symbol. Writing connects the reading and playing activities to the intellect. Szilvay (2005:14) states that “proper reading cannot be reached without connecting writing and reading. As in primary schools where reading and writing develop hand in hand, this violin school encourages the pupil to write music”. This is practical theory as I have referred to in Chapter 2.

**Pages 20 & 21**

The crotchet rest is taught by using visual imagery. The child should ‘blow out the candle’ in the rest, and thus will realise that a rest in music requires active involvement. “From these pictures, the child learns to appreciate the beauty and necessity of rests in music” (Szilvay, 2005:14). These exercises are recited, clapped and played in the four different ways as well as with alternating left hand and right hand. Szilvay also introduces ‘silent recitation’ now, similar to Frye’s activity of ‘turning down the volume’.

Frye adds that it is important to teach the rest in terms of tempi and character, showing how it changes according to context. Page 21 has clever accompaniment in the *Duettini* books, which can be played by more advanced students or by the teacher, for individual or group performance.

The first song on page 21 is one of the Singing Rascals songs from the Colourstrings Music Kindergarten called ‘Way up high’. It appears throughout the Violin ABC books,

and Frye recommends teaching the version on page 41 in book A after page 21, where it is played by bowing D string and plucking E string. Here the teacher can guide the bow while the pupil plucks, until the pupil is comfortable enough with the bow to play the whole piece on their own.

### **Pages 24 & 25**

The picture of a boat on water visually introduces the minim rhythm. “The words ‘slow boat’ can be substituted if desired for the TA – A [minim] rhythm name on this page” (Szilvay, 2005:15). This is then recited, clapped, played in the four ways as well as alternating left and right hands. Szilvay adds that the teacher should make sure that the pupil plays the minim note smoothly without emphasising the second beat.

Frye (Björkman, 2014) finds that one can make the child subtly aware of the relationship between the minim and the quaver, by guiding the bow on TA-A while the pupil plucks TI with their left hand. This exercise will gradually become more complicated, until the pupil may be asked, how many TI’s are in one TA-A.

### **Pages 26 & 27**

Frye notes that this rhythm duo is quite demanding in comparison to the previous duos as it is the first time both parts play simultaneously, whereas before pupils would take turns to play and only played together for the last bar. She states that it is good for group teaching as well and can be done in various ways, for example, two pupils play the duo while the rest of the group keeps the pulse. (Björkman, 2015).

### **Pages 28 & 29**

‘Practical theory’ pages. Bar lines are omitted in the beginning as Szilvay believes that bar lines might be confused with the stems of notes. For this reason notes are only grouped together and the concept of bars and measures is introduced at a later stage.

**Page 30**

Szilvay (2005:17) states that “[e]ach chapter of the Colourstrings violin tutor books ends with pages that are intended for the teacher to insert appropriate short, indigenous, well-known children’s or folk song rhythms (later melodies) that reflect the character of the particular country or region. Music should be taught to children as though it were their second mother tongue.” ‘Musical mother-tongue’ pages are also found on pages 46 and 47.

**Page 31**

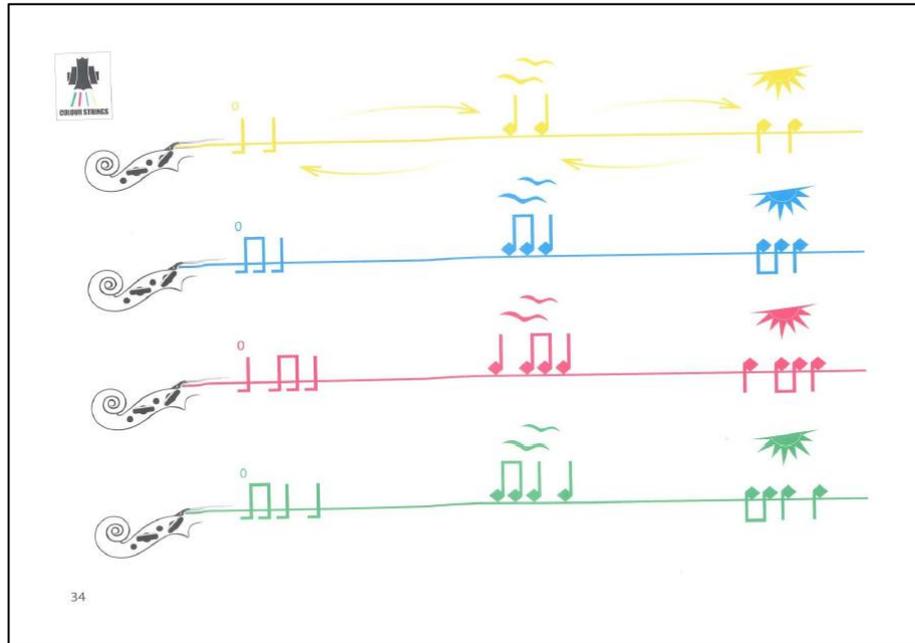
The child’s creativity is encouraged by allowing the child to compose their own songs using open strings and the rhythms that they have learnt.

**3.3.2 Chapter 2: Connecting the movements of the two hands****Page 32**

Chapter 1 focused mainly on pizzicato playing to introduce the child to the feel of the violin and the pitches of the different strings. In Chapter 2 the bow is used more independently, although the teacher still guides the bow often. This page introduces the concept of up and down bow visually.

**Page 33 & 34**

These pages follow on from what was introduced on page 7, moving up and down the fingerboard. On page 7 the child was only plucking the strings while moving all over the fingerboard, now another step is added: the child lightly touches the string to produce an octave harmonic in what would be 4th position (Figure 6).



**Figure 6: Violin Book A, page 34. Introducing octave harmonics.**

Szilvay (2005:18) notes that introducing harmonics early on “are also useful for development of the bow stroke since, while playing harmonics, a round sound will only be achieved if the bow moves firmly, evenly and fast, without stiffness.”

Frye (Björkman, 2014) adds that the bow should not stop when the pupil moves from one harmonic to another, although this might create a little glissando sound, it aids in avoiding tension as it is one continuous movement. She also suggests practising the reading ahead exercise as explained on page 7 of Book A.

### **Page 35**

Exercises incorporating what was learnt on the previous page are now played. Moving up and down the fingerboard develops a flexible left hand thumb. Szilvay (2005:19) advocates taking extra care to make sure the violin is in a comfortable and stable position, so the pupil will feel free to move up and down the fingerboard.

### **Page 36**

This exercise makes the pupil aware of the different levels that the right elbow should be on in order to play on different strings. Szilvay (2005:19) suggests that this should be

played arco to make the pupil aware of the different levels of the bow, as well as with right and left and pizzicato.

### **Page 37 & 38**

Now that the different levels of the strings have been felt, string crossing exercises are introduced on these pages. Thus these pages should be played with the bow, but always practised pizzicato as well.

### **Page 39 & 40**

Once the pupil has mastered string crossing, another element is added, namely string crossing combined with octave harmonics. Frye (Björkman, 2014) notes that the second octave harmonic, which is very high on the violin, may be taught at a later stage if the teacher sees that the bow and violin hold are not yet comfortable.

### **Page 41**

This page contains pieces wherein the pupil alternates playing arco and pizzicato. In keeping with the Kodály tradition, these pieces are only two notes (DO-RE or SO-LA). An accompaniment for the teacher to play on the violin is provided in the Handbook.

### **Page 42**

The same melodies introduced on the previous page are now taught by combining harmonic playing (arco) and pizzicato. “This exercise develops the left hand finger movements without the burden of intonation” (Szilvay, 2005:21). Szilvay recommends using simple left hand finger combinations in the beginning, and returning to this page later on to use more complicated combinations, to further improve the dexterity of the left hand.

### Page 43 & 44

Building on what has been learnt previously, three-note melodies are now learnt, first open string arco combined with pizzicato, followed by harmonic arco with pizzicato on page 44. This is the first time that numbers are printed above the notes, to indicate numbered left hand pizzicato. Up to page 43 each finger has only been referred to by its name, such as index finger, ring finger etc. Numbered pizzicato is made more conscious by introducing the child to different numbers associated with different fingers, the same numbers which will be used for the left hand stopping motion. Accompaniment for these songs is provided in the Handbook.

### Page 45

This page (Figure 7) combines open string arco, numbered left hand pizzicato, as well as octave harmonics – diamond notes are used for harmonics as is common practice in standard violin literature. There is also a mini sonata based on this page, found in the *Sonatini* book, called ‘The Grasshoppers Wedding’.

The figure shows a page from a music book. At the top left, it says "The first violin part is included in the teacher's book." In the top right corner, there is a logo for "COLUMBIA YOUNG". The page features two illustrations: a grasshopper playing a violin and a bee on a flower. Below the illustrations are several musical exercises. The first exercise shows a sequence of notes with fingerings 1, 2, and 3, and plus signs below them. The second exercise shows a sequence of notes with fingerings 4, 0, 0, 3, 4, and plus signs below them. The third exercise shows a sequence of notes with fingerings 0, 0, 0, 3, 4, and plus signs below them. The fourth exercise shows a sequence of notes with fingerings 0, 0, 0, 0, and plus signs below them. The fifth exercise shows a sequence of notes with fingerings 4, 0, 0, 0, and plus signs below them. The sixth exercise shows a sequence of notes with fingerings 0, 0, 0, 0, and plus signs below them. The page number 45 is in the bottom right corner.

**Figure 7: Book A, page 45. Combining open strings, numbered pizzicato and octave harmonics.**

**Page 48**

This page contains what Szilvay (2005:23) refers to as “rhythm scales”. All the rhythms that have been taught as well as all the harmonics can be practised up and down the fingerboard. Frye (Björkman, 2014) also suggests the reading ahead exercise for this page.

**3.3.3 Chapter 3: Natural harmonics in first position****Page 49, 50 & 51**

Szilvay (2005:24) asserts that “when practised systematically, numbered pizzicato develops independence and dexterity of the left hand fingers and thus prepares their future stopping movement.” These pages bring the child one step closer to stopping the string completely (harmonics are created by lightly touching the string, not pressing it down to stop it) by introducing the correlating natural harmonics in first position which are the same as the octave harmonics learnt in Chapter 2. This is taught to the child by engaging their imagination, explaining that the harmonics each have a ‘twin’, which can be found on another part of the violin and make exactly the same note. This is visually aided by the pictures on these pages.

These exercises begin with the 4<sup>th</sup> finger to ensure that the left hand remains soft and not clinging to the violin, and the 4<sup>th</sup> finger is also curved. The 3<sup>rd</sup> finger is then introduced, and finally the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger.

Frye (Björkman, 2014) states that the teacher should guide the left hand in the beginning, to help the pupil get to the right note. She also adds that the teacher may shake the wrist of the pupil slightly, to introduce vibrato in a sub-conscious way as well as to make sure the left hand is not tense. Vibrato requires a light finger pressure, thus starting vibrato on harmonics where there is very little finger pressure is much easier to achieve than on stopped notes.

**Page 52 & 53**

Here a two-note song that children have learnt in the Colourstrings Music Kindergarten is printed over two pages. It is sung with the words, followed by solfège and then adding solfège hand signs. It is then played with the harmonics that have just been learnt: first with the teacher playing one note and the pupil playing the other, then swopping. Once the pupil is confident with both notes they may play the whole piece on their own.

Frye (Björkman, 2014) adds that this can also be used in group teaching, where one pupil plays the higher note and the other the low. Eventually one pupil plays the whole song. The teacher can add manual vibrato here too.

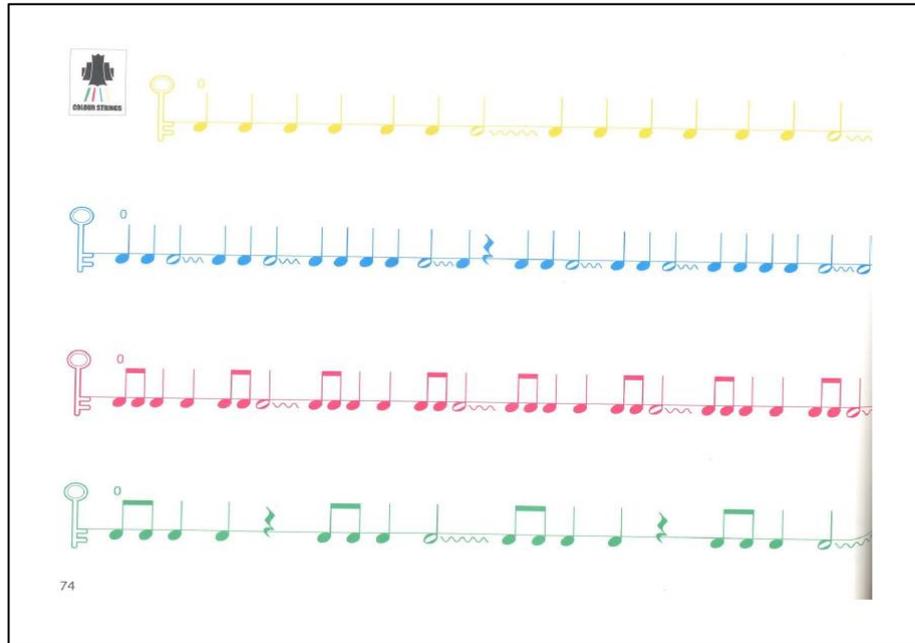
**Page 54 – 71**

These pages follow the same principle as pages 52 and 53: Introducing a song from the Colourstrings Music Kindergarten, singing it, hand signing it, and playing it on harmonics. The first song learnt on page 52 is two-notes, and follows the Kodály philosophy that SO-MI is the most natural for children to sing and thus should be introduced first.

The next song on page 54 adds LA, and contains only SO and LA. The following pages combine LA-SO-MI; DO is then added in a song which is made up of SO-MI-DO; and the last song combines all of the notes learnt in one piece.

**3.3.4 Chapter 4: Introducing the line-system****Page 72, 73 & 74**

Up to now there have been no stave lines whatsoever. These pages (illustrated in figure 8) now transform stick notation into ordinary notes and introduce one stave line – by explaining that the notes live in a house. “It is sensible to acquaint children with conventional musical notation in a sequence corresponding to the historical course of development of notating music with symbols. It is for this reason that we shall at first speak only of the one-line stave” (Szilvay, 2005:31).



**Figure 8: Book A, page 74. Introducing the one-line system.**

### **Page 75**

Rhythm exercises are now taught, combining the one line staff with all the harmonics and rhythms that have been learnt in this book. It is also advised to play the repeated octave harmonics with different fingerings, so as to prepare for shifting in between positions later on. Szilvay (2005:31) states: “The teacher should bear in mind that even at this early stage, the basic movements that both hands need for violin playing of quality should already be in the process of being introduced or ‘smuggled in’.”

### **Page 76 - 79**

Duets for which the accompaniment is provided in the Handbook are found on these pages.

### **Page 80**

This page explains the concept of movable DO in an imaginative language that young children understand. This prepares them for transposing simple melodies, which takes place in Book B and makes the child even more comfortable and confident all over the fingerboard. “Relative sol-fa [solfège] and solmisation develop in the child a

remarkable ability to orient the fingers, led by the inner ear hearing what is to be played before the notes sound on the fingerboard” (Szilvay, 2005:33).

As Book A lays the foundation of the Colourstrings approach, most of what is unique and characteristic of the approach is found in Book A, and thus also recurs in the subsequent books. For this reason Books B-D will not be described in as much detail, but only those elements which have not featured in Book A will be highlighted in the section that follows.

### **3.4 VIOLIN BOOK B**

Book B introduces the left hand stopping motion for the first time. Szilvay explains in which order the fingers are taught, his emphasis on independence of each finger being a unique feature of the method. The stopping motion is introduced at this stage as the pupil is now comfortable with the bow and producing a beautiful sound; the left hand has been prepared for the stopping motion by the natural harmonics which simultaneously ensure that the left hand wrist is not pushed against the neck of the violin, as well as that the pupil uses the whole bow. Left hand pizzicato all over the fingerboard also provides dexterity of the fingers for use during stopping motion, as well as confidence all over the fingerboard.

#### **3.4.1 Chapter 5: The 1<sup>st</sup> finger (p 1- 13)**

Chapter 5 introduces the 1<sup>st</sup> finger. The way in which it is introduced is subsequently used to introduce the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> fingers as well. The finger is put down lightly as if it is a harmonic, and then a little pressure is applied. The teacher ensures that the pressure of the finger is not too much by using stories to explain to the child, as well as manual vibrato as explained in Book A. Once the child is aware of not pushing down too hard, the child first sings the open string, then plays it, then sings the RE of the open string, listens, and then plays it. “This develops, controls and safeguards intonation and the left hand learns to follow the command of the ear” (Szilvay, 2005:35).

Two-note melodies which the pupil knows from Colourstrings Music Kindergarten, which are represented pictorially, are then played on all the strings – preceded by

singing. These two-note melodies are returned to once the child can play 2<sup>nd</sup> finger, to use for transposition all around the violin. New two-note melodies are then introduced on the one-line stave. The child sings, claps and plays these. Once the child is quite certain of the place that the 1<sup>st</sup> finger should go, songs using 1<sup>st</sup> finger and left hand pizzicato are played, to avoid the other fingers of the left hand becoming tense (Szilvay, 2005:36).

When the song does not begin on the open string, preparatory notes are provided before the DO 'key' sign to ensure proper intonation. Frye (Björkman, 2014) adds that these exercises should be played using all the different rhythms that have been learnt. In group teaching a little game could be made of it: one child invents a rhythm, and the other children have to recite it back with rhythm names. This is a form of early rhythmic dictation.

To secure intonation, songs which incorporate the 1<sup>st</sup> finger and the octave harmonics are now introduced. This is an early form of position changing, as the hand glides from first position to middle position on the violin: "In this way, we prepare the left hand for future changes of position and the descending motion is emphasised" (Szilvay, 2005:37). When pupils start with changes of position, the descending motion is much more difficult to master and get in tune than the ascending motion; by moving from a harmonic to first finger the descending motion is practised without creating tension in the left hand.

This is followed by a musical literacy exercise where children fill in the notes according to the pictorial images provided (Figure 9). The cars represent crotchets and the trains represent quavers, as learnt in Book A. Pupils fill in the notes according to the solfège written below, then sing and play what they have written. Just as in Book A, each chapter of Book B ends with pages for the teacher and student to write in folk songs which use the notes and rhythms that have been taught.

The pupil should draw the missing notes.

USE ONLY COLOURED PENCILS!

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**Figure 9: Violin Book B, page 10. Musical literacy exercise.**

Each chapter contains a ‘scale’ page, where those notes, harmonics, and rhythms that have been taught can be practised up and down, to ensure fluidity of movement. Frye (Björkman, 2014) adds that the same reading exercise explained in Book A can be used here on one rhythm, chosen by the pupil. Each scale page always refers to the Appendix wherein more exercises with first finger, left hand pizzicato and harmonics can be found.

### 3.4.2 Chapter 6: The 2<sup>nd</sup> finger (p14-28)

The 2<sup>nd</sup> finger is introduced using the same order as was used to introduce the 1<sup>st</sup> finger. Firstly, the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger is played as if it were a harmonic, and the child gently puts the finger down on the string until it makes the correct note. Frye (Björkman, 2014) notes that the teacher should avoid the word ‘press’ down on the string when explaining to the pupil. Instead, the child should be made aware that one does not need a lot of pressure. She explains it through various images, such as showing how when one sits down one does not press down into the chair, or when one puts on a light switch, one does not need a lot of force to flip the switch.

This is followed by pictorial melodies – which now contain three notes – which the child sings before they play. Melodies on a one-line staff are then played, which also

contain preparatory exercises when they do not start on the open string. Frye (Björkman, 2014) adds that the two-note melodies learnt in Chapter 5 should now be transposed all over the fingerboard, using 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> fingers. The pupil can also play the two-note melodies with one finger moving between two notes, which prepares position changing in a subconscious way.

Once the child is comfortable playing songs wherein the fingers play consecutively (0-1-2), pieces containing the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger as an ‘axis finger’ are learnt (0-2) – thus the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger appears after the open string and not only after the 1<sup>st</sup> finger. This is unique to the Colourstrings approach and teaches independence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger.

Just as in Chapter 5, the new finger is then combined in pieces with left hand pizzicato as well as octave harmonics. This improves intonation and serves as early change of position exercises, while making sure the fingers that are not being used are “above the fingerboard in an alert position” (Szilvay, 2005:41) and not tense or below the fingerboard. This is followed by musical literacy and composition pages, and ended off with another ‘scales’ page as in Chapter 5.

### **3.4.3 Chapter 7: The 3<sup>rd</sup> finger (p29-44)**

The one-line stave now progresses to a two-line stave to be able to add the FA of the scale. Szilvay reminds teachers that the interval of a semitone is often quite difficult for children to sing or play. He solves this problem by introducing the semi-tone between the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger on D string and the octave harmonic on G string (Figure 10). This octave harmonic is the same note as the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger on D string, thus the child can hear where the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger should be placed.

**Chapter 7**

Left hand stopping motion

**The 3rd finger**

Page B29

Using the 3rd finger (0-1-2-3)

**The two-line system - a two-storey building for the notes**

... accordance with the natural order of the fingers, we move after the 2nd finger to practising the 3rd finger. At this stage, the 3rd finger is used consecutively (0-1-2-3).

The teacher should bear in mind that the intonation of a semitone is sometimes rather difficult for children, both in singing and playing. Therefore it is useful to practise this interval alternating fingerings, like this:



**Figure 10: Szilvay explains how to ensure proper intonation.**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> finger is introduced in the same manner as the preceding fingers:

- i. The new finger is played as a harmonic and gradually pressure is added. The teacher ensures the left hand is not too tense or exerting too much pressure on the string by manual vibrato.
- ii. Pictorial melodies are sung and played (four-note melodies from the Singing Rascals repertoire).
- iii. Previous three-note melodies are transposed all over the fingerboard.
- iv. Four-note melodies with consecutive fingerings are first played.
- v. Independence of fingers is developed by playing melodies that contain 1-3, not only 0-1-2-3. In this case this also prepares the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger for other finger patterns that will be used in future, as care should be taken for the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger to remain above the fingerboard and independent of the other two fingers which are in use. Szilvay also employs the octave harmonic as shown in Figure 10 to aid the child's intonation between 1-3. These songs are followed by songs containing 0-3, which is particularly a difficult interval to sing and play, and also develops independence of the fingers.
- vi. Pieces containing all the fingers that have been learnt as well as left hand pizzicato and octave harmonics, strengthening the little finger (4<sup>th</sup> finger) as well as practising position changes.
- vii. Musical literacy pages, composition, transposition and scale pages.

### 3.4.4 Chapter 8: The 4<sup>th</sup> finger (p45-75)

This finger is introduced in the same manner as the preceding fingers. In this section aspects of music literacy which have been omitted from the music up to now are visually introduced. The 4<sup>th</sup> finger is the smallest and weakest finger and thus one of the most difficult to learn to play. All the left hand pizzicato and harmonic exercises have strengthened this finger in preparation for the stopping motion.

Szilvay (2005:47) states that transposing regularly teaches new finger patterns unconsciously: “The real intention as regards fingering is to train the fingers to be flexible for any other possible grouping.” Transposition makes the hand flexible for many different positions and patterns and prevents the hand “from becoming rigidly fixed in one posture – in the first position and 1<sup>st</sup> finger pattern” (Szilvay, 2005:47).

In this chapter bar lines are introduced for the first time. This is explained visually and through story telling: the notes live in a house and the lines are the walls between the rooms, the double bar line at the end is the thick outside wall. This is followed by exercises which introduce the natural emphasis of different time signatures. Figure 11 shows how the same melody can be written in different time signatures to illustrate to the child how it completely changes the character of a piece.

The figure displays four musical staves, each representing the same melody in a different time signature. The first two staves are blue and show the melody in 2/4 and 3/4 time signatures. The last two staves are red and show the melody in 2/4 and 3/4 time signatures. Each staff starts with a circled 'DO' and a treble clef. A small logo 'ORIGIN SYSTEMS' is in the top right corner of the image area, and the number '51' is in the bottom right corner.

Figure 11: Book B, page 51. Introducing the natural emphasis of different time signatures.

The repeat sign is introduced next, disguised as a face which looks backwards, to indicate that it should be played again. Frye (Björkman, 2014) encourages teachers to be creative in making up a story about this little face; when the child's imagination is engaged they will easily remember what they have learnt.

In this chapter pulse exercises also appear, where children march around on the pulse while playing a song on the violin. This is also first sung before it is played. Different concepts such as *accelerando* and *ritenuto* can be introduced in this way, by imagery such as 'the train is slowing down to come into the station' to illustrate *ritenuto*. Frye (Björkman, 2014) also suggests that the teacher claps the pulse while the children are walking it, so that children listen when the tempo speeds up or slows down.

Another musical literacy element is introduced visually, that of *Da Capo al Fine*. Szilvay (2005:50) states: "The child's musical literacy is gradually developing. The teacher should take pains with it so that reading and writing are not a burden but rather a challenge and a source of intellectual fun."

### **3.4.5 The Violin Rascals Sonatas**

Szilvay (2005:54) recommends that pieces from Violin Rascals Volume 1 may be taught once the pupil has finished Book B. These are pieces which combine the Singing Rascals repertoire with all the techniques that have been learnt, accompanied by an artistic, high-quality piano part.

### **3.4.6 Summary of the added features of Violin Book B**

#### **▪ Transposition**

As the child was only playing open strings in Book A, transposition was prepared by having them pluck and play harmonics all over the fingerboard. In Book B, every time a new finger pattern is taught, the pupil transposes songs they know by heart all over the fingerboard. This is a unique aspect of the Colourstrings method.

#### **▪ 'Preparatory exercises'**

These are found before the key signature whenever a piece does not begin on the open string. Szilvay (2005:40) explains that these serve a multitude of functions: the pupil

finds the note from the open string to ensure correct intonation; the preparatory exercises can be used as the beginning of scales exercises; they improve the pupil's tone quality; and can be seen as an "early analysis of the piece" as they contain the whole tone set which will be used in the piece.

- **Independence of the left hand fingers**

This was prepared in Book A through continued use of left hand pizzicato. This is furthered by learning a new finger, and then learning to play the new finger in different combinations (instead of only after the preceding finger). The new finger is also combined with left hand pizzicato and octave harmonics to further promote independence and dexterity.

- **Advancement of musical literacy**

Book A introduced early musical literacy containing stick notation. In Book B children are writing standard notation, albeit on one and two line staves. They are also introduced to new aspects of musical literacy which appear in the Classical music literature.

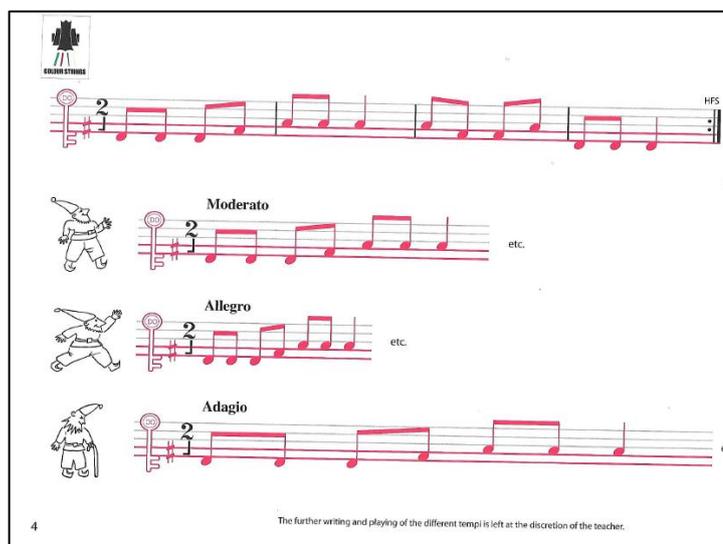
### **3.5 VIOLIN BOOK C**

Frye (Björkman, 2014) states that Book C is mainly concerned with introducing new rhythms and making the child aware of bow division, while becoming more familiar with the five-line stave. For this reason she recommends that teachers continue doing transposition exercises often, to ensure that the pupil is still playing in different positions and finger patterns, as explained in Book B.

#### **3.5.1 Chapter 9: The two-line stave within the five-line stave (p1-49)**

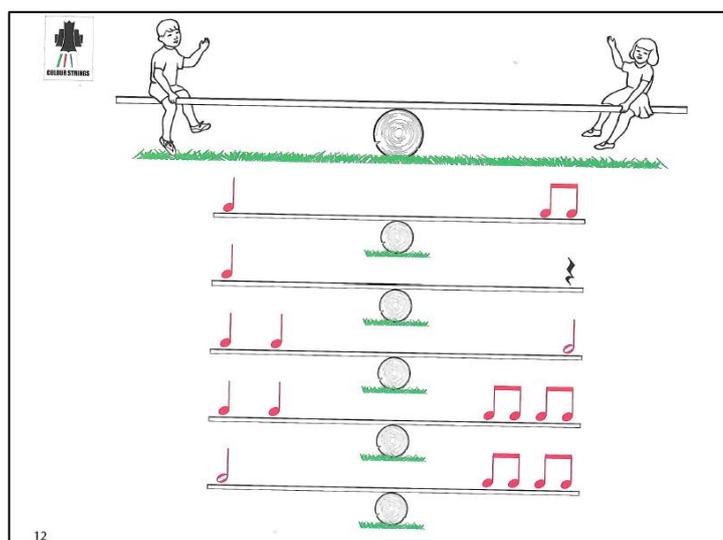
Book C introduces the five-line stave for the first time, in a language that the child can understand. The four characters associated with each string now move into a five-story house where each of them occupy a certain floor, with the Bear (G-string) living in the garden or cellar – to explain the lower ledger lines – and the bird (E-string) in the attic or roof. Absolute pitch (note names) is used from here onwards.

Szilvay warns that the transition to the five-line staff might cause occasional reading errors, thus in Chapter 9 the two-line staff is thickened and in colour within the black five-line staff. Figure 12 illustrates the two-line staff within the five-line staff, as well as visual representation of different tempi indications. Gradually the two-line staff is subtly phased out throughout Book C.



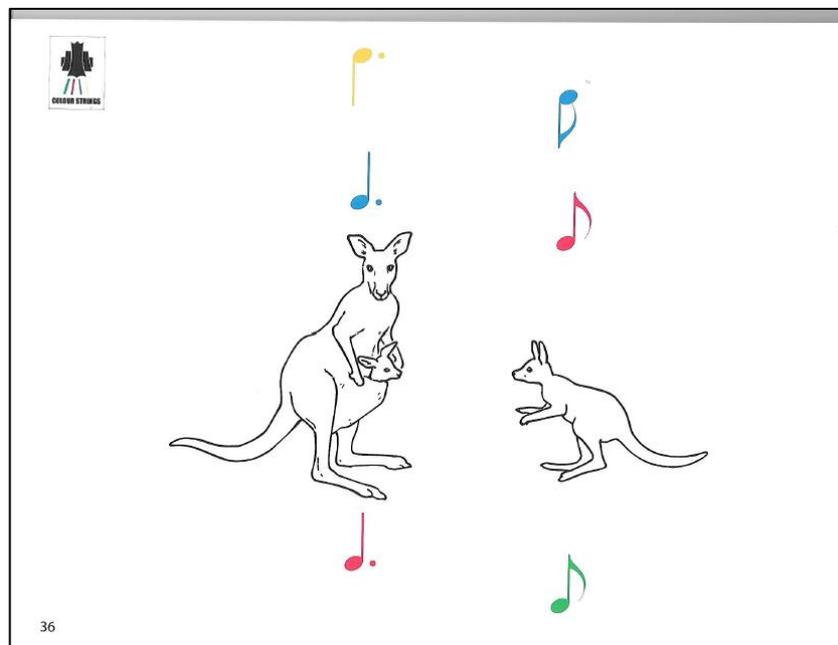
**Figure 12: Book C, page 4. Differences in tempi are introduced using pictures.**

Figure 13 is an example of the ways in which note values are visually explained. Szilvay (2005:57) recommends that the teacher invent various games wherein the children can feel the relationship between various note values.



**Figure 13: Book C, page 12. Visual explanation of the relationship between note values.**

Similar to Book A, a new rhythm is always introduced visually (see Figure 14) followed by a rhythm duo wherein pupils practise what they have learnt. The duo is in black which signifies that it is to be played on any string, or any note. For example, one child plays on open string A, while the other child can play C-sharp, making a little song in thirds. Frye (Björkman, 2014) states that intervals can be taught sub-consciously in this manner, as the children can play any interval with this duo. One can also teach improvisation, as pupils read the rhythms of the duo and play different notes, inspiring their creativity while they become more comfortable with a new rhythm. The rhythm duo is followed by various songs containing the new rhythm, as well as bow division exercises to relate the new rhythm to the bow division awareness created earlier.



**Figure 14: Book C, page 36. Visual representation to introduce the dotted crotchet rhythm.**

Chapter 9 is ended off with ‘practical theory’ pages for the child to fill in the rhythms and notes, as well as pages to compose their own piece or for the teacher to write well-known folk songs which contain the new rhythms that have been learnt. This is followed by an evolved version of the ‘scale’ exercises found in Book B, using all the rhythms that the child is familiar with and playing all over the fingerboard.

### 3.5.2 Chapter 10: Double stops (p50-54)

This chapter teaches the playing of two strings simultaneously. This is represented by the familiar open string characters to begin with, and then progresses to playing well-known melodies on the lower string with open string accompaniment. Szilvay (2005:65) recommends that the teacher return to this chapter regularly.

### 3.5.3 Chapter 11: String crossing (p55-82)

Szilvay states that, up to now, the action required of the right hand during string crossing has been achieved quite unconsciously. “The aim of Chapter 11 is to raise awareness of this movement to a *conscious* level” (Szilvay, 2005:65).

String crossing is introduced visually, and progresses gradually, beginning with string crossings between open strings only; then between 2<sup>nd</sup> finger and open string; followed by 1<sup>st</sup> finger and open string. String crossing between 4<sup>th</sup> finger and the open string is then introduced. As the strings on a violin are tuned in fifths, the 4th finger on the lower string is the same note as the adjacent open string. A picture of twins who wear different coloured shirts illuminates this similarity. Szilvay (2005:67) suggests that the child can now be made conscious of the fifth interval between each string, and the teacher may encourage the child to start tuning their own violin.

The preparatory exercises found in Book B are also used here, to be sung and played before playing the piece. String crossing between the open string and the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger is introduced towards the end of Chapter 11, alongside a visual explanation of the interval of the octave. The 3<sup>rd</sup> finger is an octave above the lower open string, which is brought into the world of the child by explaining the relationship between the two as the relationship between an uncle and a nephew. They are related but do not look or sound exactly the same. Frye (Björkman, 2014) recommends practising the intervals in group context too: one child plays the higher octave, while the other the lower, and then they swap.

In Chapter 11 the thickened two-lines disappear, replaced by a blue middle line within the black five-line stave, to aid reading. The five-lines of the stave are now no longer in grey but in standard black. Only the middle line of the stave is coloured blue as A and C, as well as B and D can often be visually confusing (see Figure 15).

Once string crossing is mastered, the 6<sup>th</sup> note of the scale (LA) can now be added. Up to now, all the melodies have consisted of different combinations of DO to SO. Although children will have been singing songs containing all the notes of the scale, this chapter represents the conscious introduction of LA.

**Figure 15: Book C, page 55. Only the middle line is thickened and coloured.**

Up to now, movable DO has been used, but has usually started on an open string. To avoid pupils associating DO only with open string, transposition exercises are done from the beginning of Book B. This page makes the fact that DO can start on any note conscious, by starting DO on the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger.

Towards the end of Chapter 11 ‘practical theory’ pages are once again provided for the child to complete – to connect the processes of playing and reading with writing ability. Reading exercises of all the notes on the staff are presented next, first with printed fingerings, then without, so that the child does not learn to rely on fingerings but rather relies on their note-reading ability. This can also be practised with Frye’s reading exercise introduced in Book A.

Chapter 11 ends with pages for the teacher to insert mother-tongue melodies containing rhythms that have been learnt, as well as for the child to compose their own pentatonic

songs. The chapter ends with a summary of Chapter 11, where children can transpose the pentatonic scale starting on different notes. Frye (Björkman, 2014) recommends coming back to these pages as often as possible, incorporating different finger patterns, as well as changes of position.

### 3.5.4 Summary of the new features introduced in Violin Book C

- The five-line stave, with note names. Solfège is still used, but note names are introduced for the first time.
- Musical literacy is further expanded:
  - Tempi indications: pupils learnt pieces at different tempi in the previous book; this is now made conscious by using the proper musical terms for different tempi.
  - Slurred notes – represented by a picture of motor boat – are first played with adjacent fingers, and then with non-adjacent fingers, as well with shifts to octave harmonics.
  - The relationship between different note values (see figure 13).
  - Syncopated rhythms are represented visually and learnt through group games, singing, clapping and eventually playing. Frye (Björkman, 2014) reminds teachers to play rhythms in different tempi once the concept has been grasped.
  - The dotted minim is explained visually and practised in group exercises, followed by the introduction of the dotted crotchet (TAI-TI).
  - Following on from the repeat sign introduced in book B, the first and second time bar signs are now introduced.
  - Dynamic indications: *piano*, *forte*, *crescendo* and *diminuendo*. Although this is introduced by the teacher earlier, in Book C it is made conscious with the proper musical terms and writing thereof. This should also be taught through games and songs.
  - Intervals such as the unison and octave are made conscious through visual imagery.

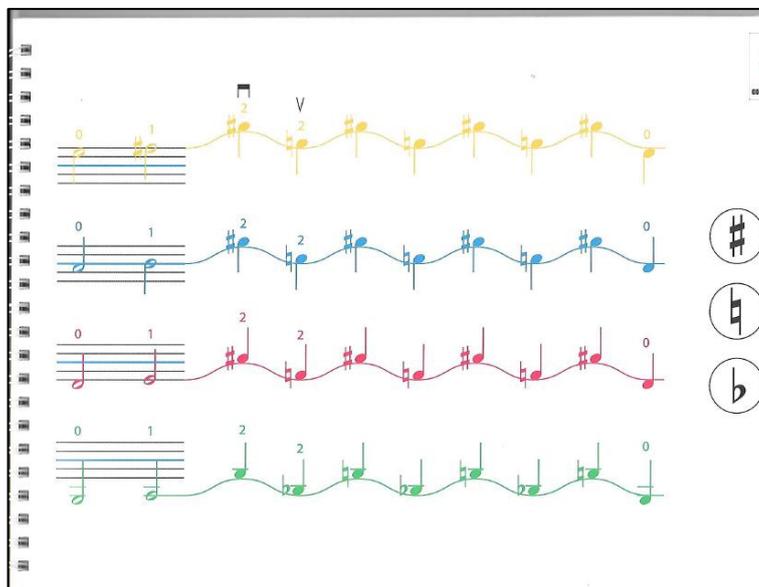
- Violin technique progresses with the introduction of:
  - Bow speed: The child is consciously made aware of the different bow speed necessary for different note values for the first time, through using the familiar speed symbols (car for crotchet, train for quavers etc.).
  - Awareness of bow speed is followed by the introduction of bow division: first only on separate notes, then two and four note slurs. This is followed by slurs containing shifts.
  - Double stops: Firstly introduced using only open strings in Chapter 10, and later, once string crossing has been thoroughly mastered, with stopping motion on both strings – introduced at the end of Chapter 11.
  - String crossing

### 3.6 VIOLIN BOOK D

Book D represents the transition from reading the coloured child-friendly notation, to standard notation. By the end of Book D, pupils are reading standard music notation and can easily read most rhythms that appear in the musical literature.

#### 3.6.1 Chapter 12: New finger pattern – major and minor pentachord (p1-16)

Book D opens with a page which makes sharps, flats and natural signs conscious for the first time (see Figure 16). At the same time a new finger pattern for the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger is introduced, namely the lower 2<sup>nd</sup> finger.



**Figure 16: Book D, page 1. Visual explanation of accidentals.**

In the beginning of Book D the staff and notes are now all in black, with only the middle line of the staff still being blue. Szilvay (2005:74) adds that fingerings above the notes are still in colour to aid reading.

Pupils play songs from the Singing Rascals repertoire with the new fingering they have learnt. Frye (Björkman, 2014) recommends that the teacher ensure the child understands the new finger pattern by often playing the preparatory exercises that still appear before the key signature of each piece.

The Singing Rascals songs are then played using low 2<sup>nd</sup> finger and an octave harmonic “to establish a more secure feeling for the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger in the new stopping position, even after a shift” (Szilvay, 2005:74). This is followed by more exercises involving octave harmonics to aid the independence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger which is often difficult for children.

The introduction of the lower 2<sup>nd</sup> finger means pentachordal melodies in minor keys can be played for the first time. Frye (Björkman, 2014) reminds teachers to always do a small ‘analysis’ with the child of the piece beforehand, as well as to add extreme dynamics and tempi, and make the child aware of musical phrasing.

Transposition is made more conscious as the same melody using different finger patterns is written out on two pages. “The children should realise through practising these two pages together that the same piece can be played in different finger patterns, depending on the starting note (i.e. key signature)” (Szilvay, 2005:75). Szilvay adds that earlier transposition of memorised songs helped to get to know the length of the fingerboard, now the melodies are not transposed horizontally on the fingerboard, but laterally as they stay in first position. In this way the child learns to transpose in many different ways.

Double-stop technique is maintained by playing the new minor pentachordal melodies with open string accompaniment. This is followed by ‘practical theory’ pages to improve musical literacy. After this the standard ‘musical mother-tongue’ and creativity pages found after each section in each book appear. Chapter 12 ends with pentachordal ‘scale’ exercises to practise and transpose what has been learnt.

Pieces from the Violin Rascals Sonata books Volume 2 can now be learnt, as many of them contain the low 2<sup>nd</sup> finger (Björkman, 2014).

### **3.6.2 Chapter 13: Major and minor hexachords (p17-31)**

String crossing with slurs is presented for the first time, the visual images aiding the child in getting the smooth transition between the strings. It is first only practised on open strings, and then followed by combining string crossing and slurs with the left hand stopping motion.

The middle blue line now transforms into a thickened black line which still divides the staff and aids reading. Only the fingerings above the notes and the key signatures are in colour so that “reading of strings crossing is aided by the [...] coloured fingerings” (Szilvay, 2005:77).

How to play *portato* is presented in this chapter, as “*portato* is one of the most important bowings and is therefore introduced at an early stage” (Szilvay, 2005:77). It is depicted visually by a stop sign, to show that the bow stops in between the two slurred notes.

The up-beat is introduced next, illustrated by a circle where the child can see that the up-beat and the last bar “belong to each other, together making a complete unit” (Szilvay 2005:78). Figure 17 shows this explanation of the upbeat. One can also see that only the middle line of the staff is thickened, while the fingerings and key signatures are still in colour. The only part which is not in standard notation as yet is the key and time signatures. “The key signatures still deviate from the standard for practical reasons: They contain only those accidentals that are actually played” (Szilvay, 2005:75).

**Figure 17: Book D, page 21. The upbeat is explained in the rhythm circle.**

Exercises which combine high and low 2<sup>nd</sup> finger are now taught, followed by songs containing these. This is followed by ‘practical theory’ musical literacy pages, wherein the pupil has to fill in the missing bar lines, being aware of the upbeat, after which the piece is sung and played. As in all the other books, the practical theory pages are

followed by ‘musical mother tongue’ pages – inserting folk songs which contain major and minor hexachordal melodies – and creativity pages, wherein the child may compose their own hexachordal melodies. The chapter ends with the usual ‘scale’ page: the scale has now progressed to include 6 notes and should be transposed all over the fingerboard.

### **3.6.3 Chapter 14: Diatony – major and minor melodies (p32-88)**

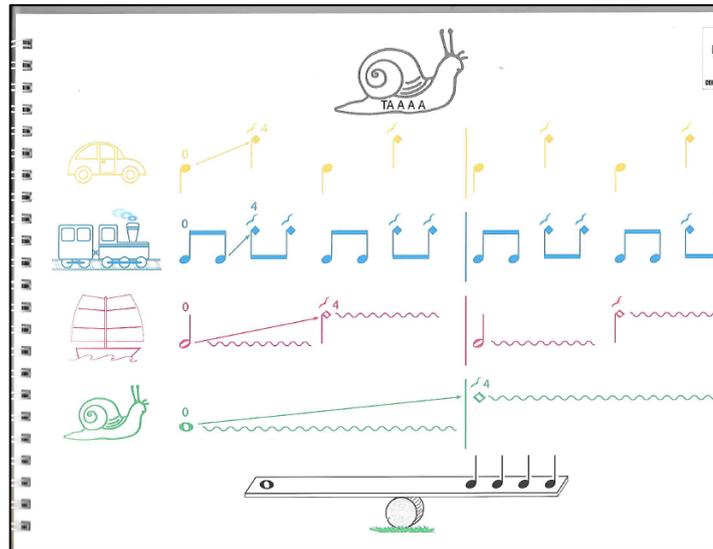
The TI-TAI rhythm, or dotted crotchet quaver, is introduced in this chapter. It is illuminated with a reversal of the familiar kangaroo speed symbols (see figure 14). This is taught in group teaching with various games, clapping, singing and playing together. As with any new rhythm, the introduction is followed by a rhythm duo and then practised in children songs. Preparatory exercises are now omitted but a space is left open for the pupil, parent or teacher to write them in if necessary. The new rhythm (TI-TAI) is then combined with its inverse rhythm (TAI-TI).

The quaver rest is presented next, using the same image of blowing out a candle as done in Book A to introduce the crotchet rest. This is clapped, recited and marched before being played. A rhythm duo containing the quaver rest follows, which can be taught in various ways (please see Chapter 9). This is followed by songs containing the quaver rest and quaver note combination.

The inverse rhythm – the quaver rest followed by a quaver note – is then introduced with another rhythm duo and songs containing the new rhythm. Szilvay (2005:83) emphasises the importance of making the child aware that rests change according to their context of dynamics and character: “A rest or pause is not just silence or emptiness; it always has a mood and a character.”

A new speed symbol of a snail introduces the semibreve, to indicate that the bow has to move very slowly for this note (see Figure 18). It is presented in relation to all the other note values that have been learnt. This page can be read one line at a time, or used in group teaching as a score where each line is played by a different pupil (Szilvay, 2005:84). The semibreve is only introduced now, as Szilvay (2005:84) finds that young children will not have the patience or the technique to play such a long note earlier on.

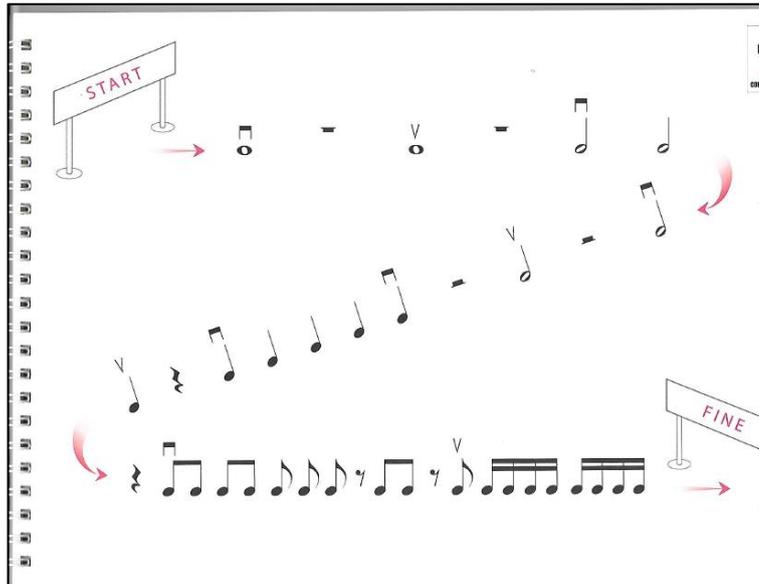
As with any new rhythm the introduction is followed by a rhythm duo and short melodies containing the new rhythm.



**Figure 18: Book D, page 49. Introduction of the semibreve in relation to other note values.**

Semiquavers are also introduced in relation to crotchets, quavers, minims and semibreves. Bow speed exercises follow, similar to those found in Book C, as well as a rhythm duo. The rhythm is further developed by songs which contain semiquavers with separate (detaché) bowings, as well as slurred bowings.

Following the introduction of all the major rhythms, time is now spent on the rests which relate to these rhythms. Introduced visually with different pictures, the rests and notes are practised all combined in one piece (see Figure 19). Szilvay (2005:86) and Frye (Björkman, 2014) both recommend this page for group teaching. The teacher gives the pulse to show the tempo and everyone must begin and end together. If one pupil plays early during a rest, the 'race' has to start again until all the pupils can play together from beginning to end.



**Figure 19: Book D, page 61. One piece containing a variety of different rhythms.**

The fermata is introduced using the image of an opera singer who enjoys the note so much that he makes it much longer. *Spiccato* bowing (when the bow bounces off the string in very short notes) is then introduced with an illustration of a bouncing ball. Frye (Björkman, 2014) explains this bowing technique by asking the children to jump without bending their knees. Children will experience that this feels unnatural and hurts one's legs. In the same way the fingers of the right hand must not be rigid, but need to bend at their 'knees' (the second joint) to make the bow jump off the string. This exercise is first practised on the G and D strings, followed by songs containing *spiccato* bowing. Musical literacy pages now follow, to practise writing all the new rhythms that have been taught.

The quaver followed by two semiquavers rhythm is presented next. As in all the preceding rhythms, it is first illustrated visually, and then practised in rhythm duos and short melodies until it also becomes part of the child's repertoire. The inverse, two semiquavers followed by a quaver, is introduced afterwards in the same way. This is then reiterated by 'practical theory', 'musical mother tongue' and creativity pages.

The scale pages which follow now contain the whole major scale, and the natural minor scale which can be transposed all over the fingerboard. Frye (Björkman, 2104:30) makes scales into a game, where pupils can play scales in a canon of thirds or other intervals; or one group plays the lower octave and the other the higher. The first

Colourstrings Scale Book can now also be employed, and Frye emphasises the fact that the ear always leads the finger when playing scales, thus singing is still employed here. After these scale pages the subsequent pages no longer use colour, although Szilvay (2005:89) encourages the teacher to use colour when the pupils require fingerings written above the notes.

Chapter 14 ends with musical literacy pages where the child has to fill in the notes as well the accidentals. Szilvay (2005:90) states that all these ‘practical theory’ pages throughout the Colourstrings books “are integrated theory exercises [which] fulfil the expectation required by Kodály himself, that a music lesson should develop not only technical skill on an instrument but also the musical ear and the musical intellect of the child”.

#### **3.6.4 Chapter 15: Arpeggios and chords (p89-98)**

Arpeggios are first played over three open strings, followed by harmonics “in order to feel the lightness required in both hands” (Szilvay, 2005:91). Once this is obtained only one string is stopped to begin with, and then two. Arpeggios over four strings are introduced in the same manner.

These arpeggio exercises are a good preparation for chord playing which follows immediately afterwards. Szilvay (2005:91) recommends teaching chords in both bow directions: down and up bow. Book D ends with ‘practical theory’ pages to ensure that note reading is thoroughly established.

Pieces from the Violin Rascals Sonata Books Volume 3 and 4 can now be played. Volume 4 is particularly helpful for teaching note names, as each piece centres around one key, using both the major and minor in the different octaves.

Szilvay (2005:92) states that “[a] child who has played Colourstrings Violin Books ABCD and Scale Book 1, can be expected to read music with fluency and will therefore be able to enjoy playing in a young children’s ensemble”. Szilvay recommends the rich Colourstrings chamber repertoire to fulfil this need. The child is now comfortable with reading standard notation and can continue with any other violin school, or Books E and F if the teacher so chooses.

### **3.6.5 Summary of the new elements introduced in Violin Book D**

- *Portato* playing
- The up-beat
- The TI-TAI rhythm
- The quaver rest
- The semibreve
- Semiquavers
- The fermata
- *Spiccato* bowing
- Arpeggios and chords

### 3.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have analysed the Colourstrings Violin Books A-D through an examination of the Handbook for Teachers and Parents as well as my personal notes of the Colourstrings violin courses. This should give the reader insight into the content of the Colourstrings violin pedagogy material. Table 2 summarises elements which aim to educate the whole child, as well as elements which provide well-rounded violin technique and musical literacy education.

**Table 2: Keywords of Colourstrings violin books A-D**

Elements which educate the whole child	Violin technique	Musical literacy
Singing/reciting, using solfège hand signs and clapping before playing	Left hand and numbered pizzicato for dexterity of left hand fingers	Child-friendly stave system
Step by step progress, moving from the known to the unknown gradually	Use of harmonics before stopping motion	‘Mother-tongue’ pages for composition and transposition
Emphasis on involving the child’s imagination and emotional world in some way, to ensure the knowledge is absorbed deeply	Singing before playing to acquire good intonation	‘Practical theory’ pages, connect reading and playing with the aspect of writing
Involving as many senses as possible.	Building on what is known	Visual presentation
Musical literacy is developed alongside technique through different activities	Transposition (aided by use of solfège)	
Development of excellent technique	Revision	
Group teaching		

Chapter 3 consists of a critical reading of the Colourstrings violin literature in order to give the reader a thorough understanding of what the violin pedagogy literature is comprised of. Now that important aspects and the purpose of the various pedagogical materials have been highlighted, I will be able to compare the principles of holistic education with those of the Colourstrings approach, which will take place in Chapter 4. This will involve drawing parallels between the philosophies of holistic education and the Colourstrings violin approach in order to identify and evaluate the holistic aspects of the Colourstrings methodology.

## CHAPTER 4

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### *Presentation of information collected and analysed*

I will now present the information that has been collected, by using the keywords of the principles of holistic education found at the end of 2.1 in Chapter 2, to illuminate the correlation between the philosophy of holistic education and that of the Colourstrings violin approach.

#### **4.1 SPIRITUALITY**

##### **4.1.1 Imagination**

One of the most important aspects of the principle of spirituality is the fact that it intends to develop the emotional and creative side of the child by stimulating their imagination. This too is emphasised in the Colourstrings approach where the child's imagination is involved from the very first lesson.

The first page of the Colourstrings violin books does not begin with black and white notes like that of traditional violin methods, but instead introduces the child to four characters with different voices. This brings the abstract concept of the violin and music notation into the world of the young child through visual imagery and stories, making it easier to relate to and thus easier to understand and remember.

The child's imagination is continuously stimulated through stories, songs, games, and pictures. Frye continuously reminds teachers to develop this aspect of the child, for example, the first time the octave harmonic is introduced, the teacher may say to the child, 'now I will show you the *magic* note on the violin'. As the note is not stopped by the left hand finger, but is produced by lightly touching the finger to the string, the sound of the note is quite airy. Relating the note to magic connects the child's imagination to that which is being taught, and thus makes the learning deeper and

longer lasting. The child feels a sense of awe at the beauty of the note and is motivated to try to produce it themselves. This encourages their inherent motivation to learn, as they will then attempt to experiment with this new magical note that has been learnt.

#### **4.1.2 Self-fulfilment**

The principle of spirituality is tied to self-fulfilment, helping the child to become the best they can be by developing all facets and not focusing solely on the intellectual components. Szilvay is aware of the fact that all education should aim to fulfil this requirement, as he (cited by Mitchell, 1994:32) states that:

The question of the objective or goal of music teaching is most important – every teacher should realize that he is educating his pupil not only to have professional knowledge and skill, but to be a human being. The basic objective of music-teaching, and the teaching of violin playing, is to stimulate the youngster to develop as a rounded personality.

Within the aspect of spirituality, holistic educators aim to develop a well-rounded human being by maintaining that the moral sensibilities of the child should be awakened in all activities that pupils undertake. This is also important to Szilvay, and is achieved through the emphasis he put on chamber music as an important aspect of music making from the very beginning. Szilvay and Frye both stress the importance of weekly group lessons, which not only benefit the pupil musically, but morally as well.

Moral sensibilities are awakened through social interaction as Frye and Szilvay aim to foster cooperation instead of competition. Weekly group lessons prepare pupils for later chamber music, as they learn from an early age to respect fellow musicians as well as to listen and respond. This cultivates a sense of community within music, making learning music a fun activity which brings like-minded people together.

#### **4.1.3 The arts (or artistic qualities)**

The artistic qualities of the child are developed from the very beginning, and are considered by Szilvay as important as the development of technique and musical literacy. Szilvay consistently reminds teachers in the Handbook for Teachers and

Parents to always vary the tempi and dynamics whenever a piece is played. This develops the child's awareness of the different characters and atmosphere which music can create. Frye also tells teachers to make the child aware of 'up-phrasing' from the very beginning, even when just playing open string pieces. This means the last two beats are not played straight, but instead the last beat is slightly lighter, as is done in music of the Classical genre.

The child is constantly made aware of the quality of the sound they are producing. The teacher encourages and guides the bow into long flowing bows which do not press into the string, but instead create a round sound. The use of harmonics before the left hand stopping motion also aids the development of a beautiful sound, as harmonics cannot be produced unless the left hand finger is precise and long bows are used.

Artistic sensibilities are further encouraged with the inclusion of the 'mother-tongue' pages at the end of each chapter, where the child may compose their own tunes. Transposition in book B and C also furthers this, as pupils are encouraged to be creative all over the fingerboard.

## **4.2 REVERENCE FOR LIFE/NATURE**

As the Colourstrings violin approach only involves teaching the violin, its capacities as a holistic approach may seem limited when compared to a holistic approach to education which is involved with teaching the child about all school subjects. Thus the Colourstrings approach may fall short when it comes to some principles of holistic education, such as this one.

Szilvay is aware that thorough musicianship training leads to a reverence and care for all things on earth, as he (2005:141) states:

I felt more and more that it was my vocation to educate musical generations who, besides being proficient in playing, were and are unselfish, social individuals with a feeling of responsibility towards their friends, colleagues and environment.

Within holistic education, this principle involves teaching pupils about the relationships between nature, as well as how to care for and nurture nature by creating ecological awareness. This is not a prominent feature of the Colourstrings approach, yet the fact

that many of the Singing Rascals songs contain references to various animals and elements of nature – as they are based on folk tunes – may be seen as subtly awakening a sense of awe and reverence for the natural world in the child. This subconsciously creates in the child an awareness of being part of nature, which leads to caring about nature. Many forms of holistic education, such as the Waldorf and Montessori systems, create an early awareness of nature in the same manner, through stories, songs and pictures of nature.

### **4.3 INTERCONNECTEDNESS**

#### **4.3.1 Experiential learning in interconnectedness**

The Colourstrings approach is based on the principles of the Kodály concept which aims for the internalisation of music, and not the mere imitation thereof. Through singing songs on words and solfège names, as well as clapping everything before it is played, music is experienced and internalised. Once music is experienced the representation (music notation) thereof is much easier to understand. Thus experiential learning lays the foundation for musical literacy. Practical theory also brings music notation to life, as pupils play what they have written on these pages.

#### **4.3.2 Transdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning**

Holistic educators advocate an approach which does not compartmentalise different facets of learning and human life, but instead brings them together by teaching in a transdisciplinary manner. This involves connecting body and mind, as well as developing both the creative and rational sides of the brain.

Although the Colourstrings violin approach is concerned with one discipline, that of music, Szilvay interprets this aspect of holistic education by consistently aiming to involve as many senses as possible. Each new aspect which is learnt, whether it is violin technique, theory or musicality, is repeated using a different sense each time, so that the learning which takes place is thoroughly understood.

Each aspect of music is integrated as much as possible, so that the child is simultaneously learning technique, theory and musicality. By focusing on phrasing, dynamics, and tempi from the very first lesson musicality is taught alongside the technical aspects of learning to play the violin, while the ‘practical theory’ pages also teach theory in the practical violin lesson. Szilvay aims to integrate all the different aspects of music by decompartmentalising them.

Each new aspect that is learnt is first internalised by the child through using as many senses as possible, and secondly integrated into all the other facets of music making. For example, when a new rhythm is learnt – like the dotted crotchet and quaver rhythm introduced in Book C – it is first visually introduced with a picture (visual sense), then clapped (kinaesthetic sense), then played (aural sense). This is followed by a rhythm duo, which integrates the new technique with musicality (playing with others) and their emotional world – social interaction brings joy. Once the child has mastered the new rhythm through various songs, a practical theory page ends off the new rhythm (which is now no longer new at all) integrating the technical and musical with the theoretical aspect. Thus different areas of music are connected and integrated.

#### **4.4 HUMAN WHOLENESS**

Holistic education is concerned with the development of the whole child, through providing a balanced education which addresses every aspect of life. The Colourstrings approach aims to develop the whole child by addressing every aspect of musical learning: violin technique, inner ear development, musical literacy and emotional development.

##### **4.4.1 Balanced education**

The main aim of the Colourstrings violin approach is to provide the child with a balanced education, a “musical parcel” as Frye (Björkman, 2014) calls it. The many ways in which the approach aims to involve the whole child, has as its ultimate goal, a balanced education.

The guided bowing, introduced in the Colourstrings courses, serves as a good example. Instead of intellectually explaining to the young child how to hold the bow, Colourstrings makes it an unconscious activity, involving the body instead of the brain in the activity of learning to hold the bow. When the teacher guides the bow, they can mould the bow hand while also feeling whether the child has any tension in their arm. This can be corrected without verbally telling the child to ‘relax!’ but through moulding as well as verbal imagery.

The gradual incorporation of more complicated musical literacy elements also illustrates the Colourstrings aim for balance. As explained in Chapter 3, the child gradually acquires knowledge about many musical literacy components, beginning with only crotchets and quavers in Book A and eventually learning about different dynamic and tempi indications, amongst other musical elements, by the end of Book D.

Szilvay (2005:50) is adamant that musical literacy must be developed alongside technique and musicality, as he reminds teachers that “it is reading that will connect movements of the hands and fingers (artisanship) with the working of the brain (intellect); violin-playing will thus become a balanced activity (ear-hand-intellect-emotion).”

Other features of the Colourstrings approach also aim to develop the child in as many ways as possible, such as Frye’s reading ahead exercises (as discussed in Book A page 7), which improves sight-reading skills. The encouragement of transposition from an early age improves creativity as well as confidence on the fingerboard – a skill which many violinists lack when performing. Doing inner hearing exercises (‘turning down the volume’ as discussed in Book A, page 5) also develops the child’s inner pulse which improves sight-reading and ensemble playing.

#### **4.4.2 Experiential learning in human wholeness**

Holistic educators reject a standardised approach to education wherein pupils do not have a chance to question and analyse that which they are being taught. The Colourstrings approach is in harmony with this viewpoint, as it aims to create independent musicians by creating an awareness of analysis from the very beginning. As discussed in Chapter 3, Frye advocates that teachers should make pupils aware of the

structure of pieces, even if it is a simple one line open string piece, by asking them whether any parts repeat, as well as having them add their own dynamics and character.

Holistic educators view experiential learning as developing the child's curiosity through experimentation to nurture their inherent motivation to learn. The Colourstrings approach creates many opportunities for transposition and composition, where the child can create and experiment. Szilvay (2005:141) maintains that he intended the Colourstrings approach to include many "game-like exercises". Various games in group lessons bring an element of fun, stimulating the child's inherent motivation to learn. Developing musical literacy by experiencing rhythms kinaesthetically – clapping the rhythm or walking the pulse – also brings another facet to the learning process, which children also enjoy more than purely intellectualisation of facts.

Experiential learning takes place when techniques on the violin are experienced physically rather than explained intellectually. Examples of these include: the teacher explaining that the finger should 'sit down' on the string for the left hand stopping motion, just as one would sit down on a chair, not press (as explained in Book B, Chapter 6); and explaining the concept of spiccato by asking pupils to jump without bending their knees – in this way they experience what the bow should and should not do to achieve the specific technique (Book D, Chapter 14). The abstract concepts are thus brought into the world of the child, and once it has been experienced it will not easily be forgotten.

#### **4.5 INDIVIDUAL UNIQUENESS**

Holistic education endeavours to respect the individuality of each child, by acknowledging that each child learns and develops at their own pace. They propose a child-centred approach to education where the teacher guides the child's learning at the child's pace, introducing new elements when the child is ready for it.

### 4.5.1 Child-centred

The Colourstrings approach may be considered a thoroughly child-centred approach as it is focused on the child and not the violin. Instead of trying to adapt the child to suit the violin, this method adapts the process of learning the violin to suit the child.

The Colourstrings approach is child-centred in the way that it progresses gradually, always moving from what is known to the unknown. This is evident from the first page of Book A: the child is introduced to the four strings through something that they can relate to – the characters of the green bear, red daddy, blue mommy and yellow bird – as these characters are similar to those found in story books or in nature. The next page introduces a more abstract representation of each string by presenting the colours associated with these characters as vertical lines which mirror the strings on the violin (please see Figure 3). This is followed by the colours displayed in short horizontal lines, which represent crotchet notes, gradually making it even more abstract. This child-friendly stave system was designed by Szilvay to adapt the process of learning music to the child, instead of adapting the child to the learning process.

A child-centred approach to education which progresses step by step is viewed by holistic educators as the most natural way for a child to learn. Forbes (2012:28) states:

The Authors [i.e. philosophers of holistic education] felt that learning is not an alien activity, but rather a capacity which people are born with and which develops as people mature. [...] In general, the inherent learning process is seen as moving from the simple to the complex, and doing so in stages.

All other aspects of music are introduced in the same way: rhythms begin simply, and gradually become more complex; while melodies begin with two-note melodies and the range is gradually expanded.

### 4.5.2 Unique child – rejection of standardised approach to education

Holistic educators call for a child-centred approach which rejects a standardised approach to education, or a ‘one-size fits all’ model. They believe that the uniqueness of each child should be nurtured so that the child may reach their full potential. This aspect is apparent in the Colourstrings approach with the emphasis on the flexibility of the method. Szilvay followed Kodály’s emphasis on the ‘mother-tongue method’: this

means that teachers are encouraged to incorporate folk songs from their local region, and also that they may adapt the method to suit the needs of their students. Although the Colourstrings approach was created in Finland, it can be adapted to suit the different circumstances of other countries and regions.

Szilvay's emphasis on revision also supports this aspect, as different children will proceed at different paces, some requiring more repetition, while others might be able to proceed quickly through various parts of the books. The teacher should be sensitive to the varying and unique abilities of each child, aiming to improve those aspects which might not come naturally to them.

#### **4.5.3 Competence-based pedagogy**

Holistic educators maintain that education should be competence and not performance based. Competence-based pedagogy is not concerned with what a child can 'perform' for peers and parents, but is rather concerned with the process and the competence that the child gains.

As seen in the quote by Szilvay in Chapter 2, section 2.2, Szilvay aimed to create a child-centred approach which met the expectations of Kodaly – providing the child with excellent musical hearing, instrumental technique, music theory and emotional development. Thus it is apparent that the Colourstrings approach does not aim to produce violin prodigies, but well-rounded human beings with high quality musicianship. For this reason, the progress is slow, but the understanding of the child is in-depth. One element of music is introduced at a time, and it becomes a part of the child as it is learnt using all the senses, as well as the imagination and the intellect. This process internalises everything which is learnt, instead of merely imitating the way that the teacher plays the violin. In this way the child becomes an independent musician, able to analyse and understand music, and able to use their own musicality from a young age.

## 4.6 CARING RELATIONS

In holistic education the *caring relations* principle relates mainly to the relationship between the teacher and the pupil: holistic educators aim to create an atmosphere of love and empathy, in order for the child to receive more than mere training in a specific subject, but instead to learn with internalised understanding.

In the Colourstrings approach the role of the teacher is emphasised in the same manner, while the role of the parent is of equal importance (see Figure 2). This is connected by Szilvay's (2005:141) assertion that "as a teacher, my intention was to teach all my pupils with a feeling of parental responsibility".

### 4.6.1 Respecting the individual child

This aspect of the *caring relations* principle is concerned with treating the child with love, empathy and respect. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Pestalozzi also relates this to how the child is taught, as gradual progression at the pace of the child respects the individual learning process of the child.

The fact that the Colourstrings ABC books have a handbook accompaniment may be seen as respecting the learning process of the child. The Colourstrings violin ABC books are purposefully simple to guide the child gradually, presenting only one concept at a time, and integrating it with what has already been taught. In this way the child is able to focus on completing one task at a time, as the book which the child uses contains little or no writing on each page. All explanations directed at the teacher and parent can be found in the Teacher's Handbook.

### 4.6.2 Moral education

As stated in Chapter 2, holistic educators believe that healthy personal relationships give the child a sense of belonging, as well as teach the virtues of respect, compassion and understanding. The Colourstrings approach fosters healthy relationships, not only between the teacher and the pupil, but also among pupils.

As the Colourstrings approach is child-centred, it aims to make the violin part of the child's world by engaging the imagination of the child. In this way the teacher is

motivating the child through love as the teacher is understanding and empathetic of the child's point of view – adapting the violin to the child and not trying to force the child to fit the abstract world of the violin. The child feels a sense of kindness and respect as their world is understood and accepted, not judged. This can be related to holistic educators' opinion that treating a child with respect will lead to the child treating others with less social power with respect too.

The incorporation of weekly group lessons from the very beginning creates a sense of community. In these group lessons children play different lines or do different activities simultaneously, learning to listen and respond to what others are doing. For example, if one would introduce the Grasshopper song on page 45 of Book A (figure 7), one child would play only the pizzicato passages, another child only the open string arco passage, and another child the harmonic passages. In this way children have to follow and listen where the other children are playing in order to come in at the right time. This not only improves reading ability, but forms a foundation for chamber music, as well as learning respect for others. Many traditional violin schools do not place as much emphasis on early chamber music, or if they do advocate for groups to play together, the whole group would play the same melody, thus all the above skills cannot be taught.

## **4.7 FREEDOM/AUTONOMY**

### **4.7.1 Instructional scaffolding**

This element of the *freedom/autonomy* principle relates to the eventual freedom of mind of the pupil. The pupil is guided through the activity in such a way that they will be able to complete the activity with less guidance from the teacher each time. This is strongly connected to the approach taken by Frye and Szilvay with regard to practising.

Practising is a very important part of learning a musical instrument and is often the component which is most frustrating to teachers and pupils, often leading to students giving up on the instrument. This is due to a variety of reasons, such as too many other extra-curricular activities, non-involvement of the parents, and also teachers not teaching pupils *how* to practise.

Frye (Björkman, 2014) teaches pupils to reflect on their own playing by engaging the child's imagination. She tells pupils that they need to be the teacher of their fingers when the violin teacher is not around to help, because sometimes the fingers are not quite sure what to do the first time round. She makes a game of playing policeman, where the policeman (the child) has to investigate the left hand fingers and the right hand bow arm, checking that they are all doing their job correctly.

In this way the child gradually becomes less dependent on the teacher, as they take responsibility for their own playing, and they also learn how to practise on their own at home. This is in alignment with the philosophy of holistic educators that the pupil should be an active participant in their own learning process in order to have more autonomy.

#### **4.7.2 Freedom of action**

This aspect relates to the principles of *human wholeness* and *caring relations*, as it involves the sensitivity of the teacher towards the child's individual learning process. Holistic educators assert that children learn best when they are in control of the pace and content of their learning.

As mentioned before, the Colourstrings violin books are designed in such a way that they progress at the pace of the child. The colourful pages also stimulate the child's curiosity and inherent motivation to learn, and the step by step progression means that the child can try to figure out the next step – if they are curious – as it is always founded on something they already know.

The books are designed for constant revision, and Frye shows teachers in the courses how the books, especially Books A and B, can be used in such a way that the teacher does not necessarily have to follow them page by page, but may jump ahead to do more difficult exercises in a simplified manner. This keeps the child interested as they feel a sense of fulfilment at being able to play an exercise which they might have initially thought was too difficult for them.

Szilvay states that the use of solfège instead of note names in the beginning gives the child freedom of technique and musicality, as it enables them to transpose all over the fingerboard to experiment with the different tone colours of the violin.

## **4.8 DEMOCRACY**

*Democracy* in holistic education involves a non-authoritarian approach by teachers, where the students have as much input in the structure and content of the academic process as the teacher does. The fact that the Colourstrings approach is child-centred and aims to teach the child through games and stories – involving the child’s world rather than trying to bring the child into an intellectualised, adult world – already reveals the non-authoritarian attitude of the Colourstrings approach.

The teacher may further develop this aspect by involving the pupil in the decision-making process in lessons, giving them a choice in what they would like to play next. Frye (Björkman, 2014) notes that this is especially helpful with strong-willed children, who might often only want to play something their own way. To this the teacher might respond kindly, saying ‘let’s do it this way first, and then we can do it your way’. In this way the child feels heard and will co-operate more easily.

## **4.9 CONCLUSION**

It is clear that there are many similarities between the philosophy of holistic education and the philosophy of the Colourstrings violin approach. This chapter has illuminated how the Colourstrings violin approach resonates with the principles of holistic education. The following chapter will discuss similarities, as well as possible differences between the two philosophies, by relating them back to the original research questions as formulated at the beginning of this study.

## CHAPTER 5

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### *Conclusion and recommendations*

This study was undertaken in order to discover in which ways the Colourstrings violin approach seeks to educate pupils in a holistic manner. An initial investigation of the principles of the philosophy of holistic education, as well as of the Colourstrings approach, was undertaken; followed by a critical reading of the Colourstrings violin material; and concluded by the presentation of the information that was collected by discussing the Colourstrings approach in terms of the principles of holistic education.

The researcher sought to answer the question ‘how is the Colourstrings approach an expression of the philosophy of holistic education?’ in order to contribute to the limited literature available on the Colourstrings approach, as well as on holistic approaches to violin pedagogy. The ways in which the Colourstrings violin approach relates to the principles of holistic education, why a holistic approach to violin pedagogy is important, as well as a summary of the cornerstones of the Colourstrings violin approach will now be discussed.

#### **5.1 THE COLOURSTRINGS VIOLIN APPROACH AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF HOLISTIC EDUCATION**

John Miller (Miller, J.P., 2012:2) states that “holistic education attempts to nurture the development of the whole person”. He continues,

This includes the intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual. Perhaps the defining aspect of holistic education is the spiritual. [...] Addressing spirituality in the curriculum can mean reawakening students to a sense of awe and wonder.

As we have seen, the Colourstrings approach addresses spirituality throughout the Violin Books A-D through continuously involving the child’s imagination and emotional world which deepens the learning process. This is in line with holistic educators understanding of philosophy which, as stated in Chapter 2, Section 2.1, is not

connected to one specific religion, but instead involves the inner, individual spiritual life of the child and acknowledges the soul as of equal importance as the mind and body. Holistic education endeavours to nurture the soul through stimulating the imagination and involving the child's creative side. The other aspects identified by Miller above are addressed in the Colourstrings approach in the following way:

The intellectual facets of the child are developed by the focus on the development of musical literacy from the very beginning. Reading and playing is always accompanied by writing music theory, so that the body and mind is connected. The mind of the child is trained in a child-friendly manner by the initial simplification of the stave system, which gradually becomes more complex throughout the books.

This connects the principles of *human wholeness*, *interconnectedness* and *individual uniqueness* with the Colourstrings approach as experiential learning is connected to intellectual learning in a child-centred manner. The child-centred structure of the Colourstrings violin approach also relates to the principle which proposes instructional scaffolding in order for the child to become independent of the teacher's input.

The principle of *human wholeness* is also found in the fact that Colourstrings aims to involve more than one sense at a time in the learning process. Involving many senses addresses the development of the physical aspect of the child, as called for by Miller. The incorporation of clapping rhythms and walking the pulse makes the music part of the body and develops the kinaesthetic sense. This is further developed through the employment of solfège hand signs.

The visual and aural senses are also stimulated, the first through visual presentation of any new aspect of music; the latter through singing everything before it is played. The focus on removal of tension in the child from the very beginning through the guiding of the bow and continuous emphasis on proper violin posture further illustrates how the Colourstrings approach aims to develop the body alongside the mind.

The teacher's nurturing attitude towards all aspects of the child, including releasing of tension, is connected to the *caring relations* principle which suggests that the relationship between the teacher and student is the foundation of social life and social justice. The mutual respect between teacher and student is also associated with the

principle of *democracy* which values the knowledge and experiences of both parties as of equal importance.

The social life of the pupil is not only developed within the empathetic relationship between pupil and teacher, but empathy is also nurtured among pupils from the very beginning. This is acquired through the emphasis on chamber music which cultivates a culture of cooperation rather than competition. Initially pupils are prepared for chamber music in group lessons and once the child has learnt the basics of playing the violin, they participate in various forms of chamber music such as playing sonatas with intricate piano accompaniment, as well as participating in string ensembles and eventually orchestras.

The final element identified by Miller as important in developing the whole child is that of aesthetics. This element is addressed in the Colourstrings violin approach, by continuously making the child aware of creating a beautiful sound, as well as developing an understanding of phrasing, dynamics, and tempi from the very beginning. This makes the child aesthetically aware and also develops their inherent creativity.

If we refer back to the keywords of holistic education identified in Chapter 2, we will find that many of the principles contain keywords which may be connected to aesthetics. The principle of *spirituality* involves beauty and creativity, the arts and imagination; *human wholeness* also involves imagination and learning through emotions; while the principle of *reverence for life/nature* incorporates the arts to develop an awareness of nature.

## 5.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO VIOLIN

Szilvay (cited by Mitchell, 1994:32) states that the objective of teaching the violin is not only to develop musical knowledge and technique but to develop a well-rounded human being. This can only be achieved when the teacher is acutely aware of the development of the *whole* child. The Colourstrings approach addresses this by aligning with the philosophy of holistic education in order to develop all facets of the child.

### 5.3 THE CORNERSTONES OF THE COLOURSTRINGS VIOLIN

#### APPROACH

- Singing/reciting, using solfège hand signs and clapping before playing;
- Always going step by step, moving from the known to the unknown gradually;
- Always involving the child's imagination and emotional world in some way, to ensure the knowledge is absorbed deeply;
- Involving the whole child: different senses are used when the child sings, claps, and uses hand signs.
- Musical literacy is developed alongside technique through different activities:
  - Child-friendly stave system;
  - 'Mother-tongue' pages for composition and transposition;
  - 'Practical theory' pages connect reading and playing with writing;
  - Visual presentation.
- Development of excellent technique through innovative exercises:
  - Left hand and numbered pizzicato;
  - Use of harmonics before stopping motion;
  - Singing before playing to acquire good intonation;
  - Building on what is known;
  - Transposition;
  - Revision.

### 5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The Colourstrings approach is holistic as a violin method but cannot be viewed as a holistic method of general education, such as Waldorf, Montessori or Krishnamurti schools. It does not endeavour to teach pupils about all school subjects, but instead aims to educate all aspects of the pupil while they learn to play the violin. For this reason, some of the principles central to holistic education could not be related to the Colourstrings violin approach as much as others.

The principles of *reverence for nature* and *democracy* are two principles that have limited connection with the Colourstrings violin approach. The first involves creating an ecological awareness through direct contact with the natural world. The Colourstrings

violin approach does not employ direct contact with the natural world, but care and awareness of nature is nurtured through the child's imagination. Songs and stories which involve nature are employed to capture the child's imagination, and in this way the child does have contact with the natural world, albeit in a more indirect manner.

The principle of *democracy* involves the democracy of pupils within the school context, wherein many pupils and teachers are involved. The Colourstrings approach is concerned with one teacher and his/her relationship with the individual pupil as well as a small group of pupils of about five or six. Although the pupils actively participate in the decision-making process with regards to which exercise they do next (as described in Chapter 4), the teacher plans the structure of the lessons and those elements which the child will have to practise at home.

In this way the Colourstrings violin approach may be viewed as an entirely holistic approach to violin pedagogy, although it may have some limitations when compared to a holistic approach to education as a whole.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

It has been proven that the Colourstrings violin approach is a holistic pedagogical approach. The application of this approach in various countries has not, however, been thoroughly investigated. As the Colourstrings approach is flexible, it can be used in different parts of the world, where there are vastly different cultural systems to that of Finland – the country where the approach was created. The success of the application of this approach would rest to a large degree on the dedication of the teacher.

Szilvay has developed a sophisticated translation of the Kodály concept onto the violin. This method has been imitated by piano and recorder pedagogues, who have produced ColourKeys and ColouRecorder methods respectively. Future study could be undertaken to investigate whether these methods seek to educate pupils as holistically as the Colourstrings violin approach does.

## **5.6 FINAL WORD**

My knowledge of the Colourstrings violin approach has been significantly expanded through the investigation of the approach alongside the principles of holistic education. I know that my newly acquired knowledge about the multi-faceted approach that constitutes the philosophy of holistic education will bring a new level of understanding in my use of the Colourstrings approach.

I hope that this study may serve as a guide to violinists interested in the Colourstrings violin approach, whether they are new to the approach or have been implementing it for years. This study may bring insight into the ways in which the Colourstrings approach may be used to not only lay an excellent musical and technical foundation for the student, but also to teach the pupil holistically. Prior to this study, the holistic aspect of the Colourstrings approach has not been researched as thoroughly and thus this study endeavours to make a valuable contribution to the academic writing on the approach.

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