

For Music Teachers – “Trying to decide if Musikgarten is right for me”

An email dated Friday, June 13, 2008, from a Music Teacher in US

I have a Music Ed degree, piano emphasis. I taught General Music in the public schools, pre-k through 8th grade and LOVED it. Left the public schools when I started having babies (who are now ages 2,5 and 7) and taught private piano some. I also accompany for a local high school, which I also love. I never liked private teaching as much as General Music. It was just okay.

Two years ago a series of family crises forced me to close down my piano studio indefinitely. It just occurred to me recently that, instead of building it back up from the ground again, why don't I try to find something I might like better?

My children have taken some Musikgarten classes, so I am familiar with it. We took one session of the toddler class, and either two or three of the Cycles of Seasons class. I liked it very much. **If anyone could give me some feedback, encouragement, warnings, whatever, about perhaps going this route, I would appreciate it. There are training sessions where I live (Atlanta) next month. Some thoughts I have:**

1. Is it very packaged and/or monotonous? I am a VERY eclectic person and would hate to feel like I don't have much room for flexibility.
2. What is the training like? Did you get a lot out of it?
3. Generally speaking, what is the pay like? Does it warrant spending all the money on the training? Would there be anything left after having to pay a sitter for my own children while I teach? Is it hard to get a class and keep students? Does scheduling usually work well with your own families' needs and hours?
4. I am, of course, not used to having parents in the class; is that a challenge? Do you like it? Dislike it?
5. Which class would you recommend I take first?
6. Any "heads up" to someone like me, who has a public school GM background? What is different, better, or worse?
7. How might I know this is a "good fit" for me? What traits do a "good MG teacher" have?
8. How does MG compare to KinderMusik (KM)?
9. What are your personal favorite/least favorite things about it?

Thanks for any feedback!

Jenny, <http://beanmommyandthethreebeans.blogspot.com>

For Music Teachers – “Trying to decide if Musikgarten is right for me”

Reply from Ellen Johansen, a reputable and experienced music teacher in New York:

I will try to answer your questions from my perspective. I have taught MG for over 10 years and I also teach private piano. MG was my first experience teaching group classes and I love the format.

1) Is it very packaged and/or monotonous?

If you mean, is it scripted, no. The curriculum is a teacher's resource. You can use it anyway you like. You can follow the lesson suggestions step by step or you can mix and remix as your heart desires. Consider the material a treasure of high quality material that has been selected for its high quality and supported by ideas that have been tried out by other experienced teachers. You can take what you want and leave the rest.

I am a VERY eclectic person and would hate to feel like I don't have much room for flexibility.

Not to worry. On the other hand if you feel like you have a learning curve know that in the first year of two you can follow it straight and feel pretty confident.

2) What is the training like? Did you get a lot out of it?

The training is hands on. Not only do you meet other like minded teachers, you get to practice teach, you get to watch demo classes and you get to spend time working with a master teacher. I have heard participants say they learned a tremendous amount because the training is more than content. It is context as well.

3) Generally speaking, what is the pay like?

That depends on many factors. Are you planning to teach the classes in your independent studio? in a preschool? in an elementary school? at a recreation center? How many classes do you intend to teach? These questions will be addressed during the **business section of the training.**

Does it warrant spending all the money on the training?

Yes

Would there be anything left after having to pay a sitter for my own children while I teach?

Yes

Is it hard to get a class and keep students?

This depends on you. There is plenty in the archives of this loop that addresses this issue.

For Music Teachers – “Trying to decide if Musikgarten is right for me”

Does scheduling usually work well with your own families' needs and hours?

Yes

4) I am, of course, not used to having parents in the class; is that a challenge?

Depends on your style and the parents. Some classes are a treasure to have the parents in the room. It brings out the best of the program. Sometimes I want to remove the parents because they are not behaving. Check the archives for perspectives on this issue.

5) Which class would you recommend I take first?

I would start with the **Toddler** level first. Then I would move upwards as the children grow.

8) How does MG compare to KinderMusik?

There is lots on this in the archive. Since you are at a yahoo group with mostly MG teachers you may find the archives to be biased. Having taught both KM and MG I can only say that they are very different in many ways but superficially you may think they are similar. As you study each program I am sure you will find major differences.

9) What are your personal favorite/least favorite things about it?

I love the philosophy behind MG. I know there is a 9 year plan that follows the developmental needs of the children. I love the quality of the music and the home material. The trainings are of highest quality. I love attending the demo classes during the trainings. I love the dances, the finger plays and the imaginative stories that are part of the curriculum. I think the Keyboard program is fantastic and there is nothing like it out there.

My least favorite thing is that I don't have more teachers in my area teaching this curriculum. I wish it was in every community in my area and I had more colleagues who understood what I am doing and appreciate the results.

Ellen Johansen

ellenjoh@yahoo.com

Check out my website at www.EllenJohansenMusicStudio.com

Ellen Johansen Music Studio,

8 Stratton Square

East Hampton, NY 11937

Tel: 631-324-9648