

PHOTOGRAPH BY TORI HOGAN



Teaching Life Values through Music and Ukelele

by Kimo Hussey

- Playing technique needs to permit fluidity.
- Musical notes and phrases need to be accurate.

All of these, and more, are easily presented in a learning atmosphere that is characterized by fun. Enjoyment is the magic that enhances learning.

The rules for creating harmony can also be used to resolve disharmony. In music this is called *dissonance* and most often is used in music to create energy. That energy moves toward a 'peak,' which is then resolved by following the rules mentioned above. This cycle of creating energy that leads to resolution gives music life: Ebb and flow, ups and downs, musical tides, and expressive nuances for the musician and listener. Here again, resolving musical disharmony helps us resolve real-life situations as well.

The instrument I teach most often is ukulele. It is a very simple instrument to learn to play and has quite the universal appeal that is evident in its ongoing worldwide renaissance. Ukuleles come in sizes that even the youngest player can comfortably hold and play. A teacher can get anyone playing and singing a song within five minutes. Ukuleles are portable, durable, inexpensive, and sound great even as a solo instrument. Best of all, it is extremely popular with all age groups.

Balance

In addition to harmony, there are important lessons about balance in one's life to be learned from music. In teaching ukulele, I create a template for instruction. My favorite tem-

It is probably not necessary to explain to an early education teacher about the therapeutic values inherent in music. If you have ever played quiet, calming music at naptime for children, you have seen some effects firsthand. But how important is music as part of a child's education as a whole and what real-life values will they gain from the time and effort we use to teach them music?

Children are naturally (and thankfully) very inquisitive, a wonderful trait which opens doors to education, and music especially. This natural inquisitiveness invites children to music if we can simply come up with a means of effecting that invitation. They are attracted to music and want to have fun. And we want to make their musical experience rewarding. Certainly perseverance, balance, patience, teamwork, and discipline are a large part of those gains. Further, neurological studies consistently have shown that involvement with music helps develop several parts of the brain, including areas primarily used in mathematics. For this reason, music can be a wonderfully supportive alternative to traditional learning methods characterized by repetition and rote memorization.

Harmony

Music's most significant contribution is teaching a student to understand there are very concrete rules that must be followed in order to create musical harmony. Importantly, those aspects of music that create harmony are easily transferred to life lessons, which also require discipline to create harmony in life. Among these:

- Instruments need to be of sufficient quality and must be tuned properly.

Kimo Hussey has always had an enduring interest in music and education. His plans to return to Hawaii to teach music in high school were interrupted by a draft notification, whereupon Kimo decided to enlist in the U.S. Air Force and became a pilot. Retirement from the Air Force permitted a career change, which elevated music and education from a 'part-time' activity to prime-time status. His 20+ years as an instructor nicely enhanced his interest in education and using music and ukulele as the catalytic pair to jump start his second career. Kimo has spent the last 15 years travelling the world to do music workshops and concerts. Embracing the ongoing worldwide ukulele renaissance made it very easy for Kimo to return to Hawaii where he was born and raised, plus rekindle his ukulele interest that first started in childhood. He continues worldwide travel for workshops and concerts, plus hosts his own ukulele TV show. In addition to instruction and performance, Kimo is also degreed in music and is published and recorded.

plate is a wheel that has four spokes: 1) right hand technique, 2) left hand technique, 3) understanding of music's organization, and 4) how we combine the other three spokes to create beautiful music. In order to create balance (making the wheel 'roll' smoothly), each spoke has to be equal in integrity to every other spoke. For example, if the student primarily develops left hand technique at the expense of right hand technique (as is so often the case), the resulting music will not enjoy good balance.

As a parent or teacher, to help a child find and understand balance is necessary for children to learn at the highest level. When there is imbalance, children will be driven to find balance simply because the dissonance, which results, is unpleasant. It is a powerful motivator.

Patience

I also emphasize patience in my music instruction. We've all heard "Practice makes perfect." In music, practice promotes perseverance: persistence and endurance to achieve — great values for children to learn. In teaching music, cultivating patience results in meaningful rewards.

Teamwork

Another important value supported by music instruction is teamwork. This includes valuing the process of working with others, such as when you are in a musical group and all sounds/voices must harmonize to be successful. It also includes working with and trusting the instrument, trusting the music written by others, and working with ideas and concepts taught by more experienced musicians, parents, or teachers. When teamwork is lacking, disappointment often follows.

Discipline

Perhaps one of the most important values learned through music is that of discipline: self-control, self-mastery, self-restraint. In music, there is no easy way out of practicing in

In May 2011, when the World Forum Foundation convened in Hawaii, one of several day trips took participants to Iliahi Elementary School in one of Hawaii's rural communities, Wahiawa, where they witnessed firsthand the positive effects of a concentrated and consistent volunteer-driven music program for young children. Parents, teachers, and administrators alike who work with these students have reported dramatic results. Equally dramatic are the smiles of satisfaction on the children's faces.

order to achieve meaningful results. The teacher's challenge is to nurture discipline while making music fun for children.

Music is so accepted today as being therapeutic. Music experiences can foster social development. It is quite common for several people in the same family to play ukulele and enjoy their own jam sessions. All those wonderful values, which play such an important role in teaching children to play ukulele, also apply socially in jam sessions.

From a teacher's perspective, implementation of a meaningful program of ukulele instruction is easy to institute and relatively inexpensive. The primary qualification of the teacher is an enduring passion to teach, coupled with an equally enduring trust of music principles portrayed through ukulele.

Studies have shown again and again that getting children involved with music education early has positive, lifelong effects. One of the most joyful and successful examples is the Venezuelan conductor, composer, and economist Jose Antonio Abreu. Abreu worked with poor children for many years, driven by a vision that the world of classical music could help improve these children's lives. He created the music network El Sistema, a volunteer-driven music program introduced into schools. Since its beginning, this program has provided hundreds of children with opportunities to learn core values that can facilitate an exit from poverty. For his work, Jose Antonio Abreu was awarded the international Polar Music Prize in 2009 to support and continue his work aimed at promoting traditional values like respect, fellowship, and humanity. His achievements show us what is possible when music becomes a part of every child's life.

For more information on the study of ukulele, contact the Pacific Music Foundation, (www.pmfhawaii.com), an organization whose service to community is education in music that soothes.