

Montessori on C Scale

When I first was taking lessons to play the piano I was introduced to the “C” scale. Learning where to put your fingers on the keyboard was the beginning of creating harmony. The relationship of one note to another was the beginning of bringing order to the sounds that would come from the piano.

Unless we had that unique gift of sound discrimination where our ears alone guided us we needed our eyes and our mind to begin to read the musical notes to go from making noise to making music.

Discordant is a five dollar word describing what most of us do when we bang on a piano without discretion. The ten dollar word is cacophony – that is what you get when an orchestra tunes up each playing a different note and sound without any harmony. It is also often what you hear in a traditional daycare.

So where does the “C” scale come into play in Montessori? It is not exactly about the music but much more about the harmony. A Montessori environment by its nature is positive not lending itself to discord or negativity. It is a place where courage is the anthem that is played. When everything in life is new, it takes courage to navigate, to start, to initiate. (Most of us have some experience with new schools, new houses, new neighborhoods, and the anxiety that newness brings.)

To the child – everything is new especially when you begin to leave the cocoon of home and family and are faced with a bigger and bigger world. It takes courage to try new

things. (How about the experience of new foods?) And it takes a tremendous amount of encouragement to make courage a default position and attitude.

Ironically, it is the song “Home on the range” that provides a context for Montessori harmony. After singing “...Where the deer and the antelope play,” We then sing “never is heard a discouraging word ...” If courage is a significant virtue, attribute and real-life necessity how do we create the environment for its birth, growth, flowering, and explosion?

Mixing metaphors here for a moment. If you have a favorable wind you add more sails and hoist the anchors. Discouragement, like anchors, keeps you from sailing while encouragement is a steady breeze to reach a new horizon.

Each of us really do march to our own music – Heaven’s music composed for us. And as guides we need to know what “key” our friends are being called to play in. It may not be “C”, but it is the one God ordained for them.

And remember, as Henry David Thoreau wrote, “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.”

The harmony of life is to sing “your” song in the “key” that God gave you and to encourage those who march to a different drummer.