

THE POWER OF MUSIC

A St Andrews-based music class group is tuning up for UK expansion.

Musical Steps, which offers music and movement activities for babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers, is the brainchild of Cathy McCallum, mother of two and trained primary school teacher and music graduate.

Due to the ongoing success of classes throughout Scotland (and the first batch south of the border), the company is launching its first teacher training programme, aimed at enhancing musical life in the UK – and launching some new careers to boot!

So, what's it all about and why could YOU be next in line to spread the sound of music?

Musical Steps provides a first-class foundation in music for children aged from four months to five years, offering a unique blend of songs, percussion playing, musical games, movement and listening activities to give children and their parents/carers the ideas and confidence required to make music together.

Cathy said, "Bringing your child to a music class is not only good for them (and you!), it's great fun too. It's a place to meet people, learn new skills and pick up ideas to use at home. Making music together is a great way to bond with your child - and they love it".

But Cathy's keen to stress that, in addition to a crucial focus on fun, there is also a strong educational foundation underpinning all of Musical Steps' activities.

"In the early 1900's, the composer Kodaly introduced a singing programme into Hungarian schools which had an amazing side-effect. Children who received daily music lessons showed a marked improvement in their all-round academic achievement. Studies have since shown that music-making brings many other benefits, including helping with language development and physical co-ordination, developing social skills and teamwork, promoting self-expression and creativity and reducing stress. Music has been shown to be one of the most powerful ways of helping children develop emotionally, socially and neurologically - and the earlier you start the better".

Such is Cathy's personal passion for music, the company is embarking on its first teaching training programme, with three-day courses aimed at recruiting fresh talent with the reward of a fun and flexible career.

So who can apply?

Cathy said, "More than anything, we're looking for people with energy and enthusiasm. Musical experience is obviously key, with the need for a good sense of pitch and rhythm and a clear, strong singing voice. You must love making music and be able to convey this confidently to children and their parents. Formal qualifications are desirable but by no means essential and we'll assess all applicants on their merits.

"We also need people who are organised, reliable, committed and professional and who have experience with children. You could be a mum or dad, nanny or someone with a teaching background. Regardless of where your experience with children comes from, you'll need that crucial sense of fun and patience. Teaching classes has had a hugely positive effect on my life – and that of my family – and I'm delighted to be giving that opportunity to others".

The first Initial Teacher Training Course will be held in Glasgow on three Saturdays – 23 June, 28 July and 25 August. For an introductory discounted fee of £550 plus VAT, the course covers every aspect of setting up, running and teaching baby and toddler classes. Additional and optional courses will be available thereafter, enabling participants to train, if they wish, as teachers of the pre-school classes, take Musical Steps into nurseries and run children's parties.

Cathy said, "The course has been designed in consultation with experts in the fields of business, music and education and is based on our experience of running popular, successful classes over several years. The modular system will allow teachers to train to the extent they wish, offering a flexible and personalised approach. We hope to take our training courses into every corner of the UK, not just the big cities, although Glasgow is proving a popular location for course no. 1".

So what can YOU gain from taking up the challenge?

Flexibility: Be your own boss, choose when and where you teach. Work full or part-time and plan your classes to fit around your own lifestyle.

Affordability: This isn't a franchise, so there is no large financial outlay or risk on your part. All you pay for is your training course, the hire of the equipment you need, and a monthly licence fee. There's no catch and no hidden extras, and you can easily recoup your initial expenses within the first two or three months of teaching, even if you decide to teach only a couple of mornings a week.

On-going support: We provide everything you need to run your classes including all equipment, complete class plans, administration software and regular updates, information, help and advice.

Our website: You will have your own individual page on the website to advertise your classes. There is also a private teachers' forum for networking and support.

Earning a good income: The financial rewards are excellent.

It's fun: The classes are all about having fun. It really is fantastic to be paid for doing something so enjoyable.

It's rewarding: It's a privilege to watch babies and children grow and develop, as you educate them and open up a whole world of music-making. The classes also provide a valuable service to the community, both educationally and as a point of social contact for new parents.

The training: Our teacher training programme is high quality, comprehensive and affordable.

If you wish to register for the Glasgow course, contact Cathy via:
Email info@musicalsteps.co.uk
Website www.musicalsteps.co.uk
Telephone **0845 838 2354 (local rate)**

The closing date for registering for the Glasgow course is Friday 8 June 2007, however, further courses are being planned for the Autumn in Stirling, Aberdeen and Northern England.

On a final note, a St Andrews mother-of-three recently won a competition to name the child star of the Musical Steps logo, bagging free classes for a term and a £10 book token. Thanks to Sue Dawson, the cheery girl clutching a tambourine and jingle bells is now officially known as 'Cymbalina'. Sue was particularly thrilled, given that it's the first thing she's won in her entire life!

Cathy said, "We received lots of great entries and would like to say thanks to everyone who entered, but Cymablina was the most inspirational suggestion. I visualise her as a modern fairytale princess and we're already planning lots of new class activities based around her".

If the inspiration behind Cymbalina is anything to go by, dreams can indeed come true...

Musical Steps offers three classes - the Baby Band, Toddler Troupe and Music Express - with classes costing from £3.50-£4.50 per class. Visits to nurseries, playgroups etc are also available on request. For more information on enrolment/classes, please visit www.musicalsteps.co.uk, email info@musicalsteps.co.uk or call Cathy directly on 0845 838 2354 (local rate).