



THE KEYBOARD LABORATORY

To really put some zip into your classroom band, purchase at least one electronic keyboard. Electronic keyboards are now well within the limits of a school music budget and their quality is truly superb.

Most keyboards have at least 100 different instrumental sounds and may have rhythm and drum sounds and a single finger chord function that can all add exciting tone colour to your classroom band.

Keyboards can be used to play melody and harmony parts and/or fully fingered or single fingered automatic chords.

Try using many of the different rhythms to accompany the classroom band. A funk or rock rhythm for example will give a very different feel to the music charts.

KEYBOARD LABORATORIES

An innovative approach to music teaching in primary, intermediate and schools has been the establishment of keyboard laboratories. Once the preserve of secondary schools only, a keyboard laboratory consisted of 12-15 keyboards, a set of headphones per instrument and a fairly complex teacher console allowing teachers to communicate with individual or groups of students. Even without the console, primary and intermediate schools found the outlay too expensive.

Two factors have changed all this. Firstly the price of keyboards continues to come down and the quality has improved. Secondly, schools can combine to minimise the expense.

AN OUTLINE FOR A SUCCESSFUL KEYBOARD LAB SCHEME

- Three neighbouring schools combine and purchase about 4/5 keyboards each making a total of 12-15 keyboards between the 3 schools which are combined to make a keyboard laboratory.
- The 12-15 stand laboratory is set up at one school and retained by that school for 5 weeks.

- During the 5 week cycle, all students from Year 4 – upward have at least 3 hour sessions on the laboratory each week. Extension groups at lunch times, before and after school can also be included.
- After 5 weeks the keyboards then move on to the next participating school.
- The cycle is repeated twice during a school year giving students at each school a total of ten weeks each per year on a keyboard.
- Schools retain their 5 keyboards personally for the remaining ten weeks of the year. This is handy for end-of-year concerts and productions and the classroom band.
- Full classes of 30 can be accommodated by assigning two students per keyboard or split the class in two.

FURTHER POINTS

- Set up the laboratory in one permanent location for each five week cycle.
- Use the music charts in this book for teaching material.
- The laboratory could be used instead of recorders to teach music reading and develop musical concepts. One advantage keyboards have over recorders is that when everyone plays the note G, this is in fact the note you get!
- Establish simple ground rules. One important rule is that when the teachers says 'hands off' – all playing ceases and hands come off the keyboards.
- Have one set of headphones per instrument to allow for individual practice while you work with individual students or small groups.
- Always try to finish each session with groups and all the class playing together on the keyboards.
- Organise a grand concert at the end of each five week cycle for parents and all classes to share their keyboard work.
- Combine your keyboards with recorders, ukuleles, guitars, tuned and untuned percussion instruments to make a really exciting classroom band.