



# JOINING IN MUSIC

## Bringing harmony to the classroom !

I work in a primary school and like all of us, I couldn't have been more shocked when the country went into lockdown. My last day in work was the 20th of March 2020. I drove home feeling a bit confused. I had that feeling of 'I'm on holiday' but combined with a sense of doom. For the next two weeks, I have to admit that I did almost nothing: I got up really late, watched daytime TV, dragged myself out once a day for a bit of exercise, read a book, more TV and so on.

After a couple of weeks, with the realisation that this was not going to be over anytime soon, I got the feeling that I didn't want to waste this time. Could I come out of this and have achieved something?

During those first two weeks a decree came out from the local authority that staff had to make the most of their time by doing all 20 of the corporate online courses! All of them. Without exception.

I started fairly enthusiastically with the ones relevant to my job - nothing wrong with brushing up on 'Child Protection' and 'Adverse Childhood Experiences'. But by the time I'd trudged my way through to 'Asbestos Awareness' I'd had enough!

Anyway, all this got me thinking that I had something worth putting in an online course. My specialism? Building resilience in children and young people using music... for non musicians!

I knew there was a market for it and I certainly had the experience and expertise: I'd trained school staff during INSET days and in the classroom, and those I had trained went on to use the programme with great success!

So, it was on a Saturday morning that I sat myself down with my laptop top and started to write...

Oh, it was painful! The ideas were all in my head but my two index fingers just weren't up to the job as far as the typing was concerned. I would focus on the keyboard so carefully, but when I looked up there were still typos, and by the time I had corrected those typos I had lost the flow. Agghh!

Okay, so I realised that there was something I needed to do before I wrote any more of my course:

## Side project number 1: Learn to touch type

I tried out a couple of free online touch typing courses but I wasn't really getting anywhere. I needed to learn this quickly.

So, after the obligatory trawl through Google, Trustpilot etc, I opted for KAZ Type. This came top of all the recommendations and claimed to be able to show results in 90 minutes (and their mascot was very cute). I decided to give it a go and signed up, and what's more, I decided to get my children to do it too.

My eldest son is 18 and has ADD. He finds writing difficult so I thought he might find some benefit. My youngest is 16 and is about to start his A-levels so I felt certain that fast efficient typing would benefit him too. They were still enjoying the lockdown lazy days and not that keen on the idea but with a bit of a nudge from me, we all got started immediately.

I worked through each section, all the time thinking "this is pretty easy", this might work. And, in less than half an hour my eldest son came out of his room and asked me "why didn't anyone teach this to me in school". I could see exactly what he meant. Even my youngest son was impressed (and it's not easy to impress him), "this is actually good" he told me.

Skip forward a few days (yes, really, within a few days!) I was slick enough to get going. I typed up my introduction and started working through the content for each module. Woohoo! No stopping me now, I thought to myself, I'll soon have this nailed.

Naively I just kind of supposed that once I had the words in a Google doc, the hard bit would be over. I had no idea what was to come. I hadn't really thought about how I'd go about getting all that lovely content in front of any learners.



Penny is a registered Music Therapist and teacher in mainstream and special schools and with over 20 years experience. She understands and has seen how the power of music can help children with behavioural and social difficulties re-engage with learning. She has also trained colleagues to run successful therapeutic groups and using the Covid-19 lockdown as her motivation, developed a series of courses, the first launching this September and designed to help all age groups.

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