



LaValla School

Viola Wheeler Music Program

April & May 2009

The Viola Wheeler Music Program opened on the 21st March but as the school holidays began so closely after that date, the second class was not until the 25th April.

In the Modern music class many students were particularly interested in learning the key board so we decided to include one extra class for keyboard. This class started on 25th April so now the program has 6 classes.

The teachers

All of the classes take place every Saturday during the school term

- Wedding: Mr. Bo Rithy teaching two classes from 1 - 2 pm and 2 - 3 pm
- Drum: Mr. Meas Somary, teaching two classes from 1 - 2 pm and 2 - 3 pm
- Pen Peat: Mr. Meas Saaim, teaching two classes from 1 - 2 pm and 2 - 3 pm
- Modern: Mr. To Brose, teaching four classes from 10-11 am and 11 - 12am; 1 - 2 pm and 2 - 3 pm
- Singing: Mr. Soun Rotha teaching four classes 10-11 am and 11 - 12am; 1 - 2 pm and 2 - 3 pm
- Keyboard: Mr. Hem Sarath, teaching four classes 10-11 am and 11 - 12am; 1 - 2 pm and 2 - 3 pm

The students

Drum:	12 students
Wedding:	12 students
Pen Peat:	10 students
Singing:	41 students
Modern:	29 students
Keyboard:	39 students
Total students:	144



Mr. Hem Sarath, keyboard teacher



drum class



Wedding class



Pen Peat class



Modern class



Singing class



Keyboard class

Activities summary

The project is going well, all of the students are very happy to join the Viola Wheeler Project and are very grateful for the support that Grapes For Humanity US Inc has given them in this opportunity.

The **drum** class students are progressing quicker than the others because understandably drumming is easier to learn at a basic level than some of the other instruments. The students can now play three songs by themselves. They are happy with their studies and they feel excited to learn more and continue developing.

The **singing** class is going really well and there are a lot of students interested in joining. During the first few classes the students were learning notes but now they have progressed to singing popular Khmer songs. The whole class really like to practice with the CD player in their free time and they are improving really quickly. A few of the female students have particularly good voices, the teacher can see their talent and believes that they can be good singers in the future if they keep working hard.

The **Modern** class is going really well; the students can play each instrument at a basic level but they are not quite able to play as an ensemble. We hope with a few weeks more study that they will have the confidence to play as a group. They are so interested with their studies and are also developing their skills in reading sheet music. Their aim is to be able to give a strong performance when Grapes for Humanity US Inc when they visit in November.

The **Key board** class developed because so many people wanted to learn in the modern music class. Initially they studied reading music, and in recent weeks they have been introduced to the keyboard. There are 6

keyboards in the class, and 2 students share one keyboard and learn together. They do not yet feel confident to play together, but we hope that by the next report they will have developed their skills further.

The **Pen Peat** and **Wedding** classes have less students than the other classes. Although traditional music is highly respected the instruments involved are harder to learn and the students cannot see their own progression as fast as those in the other classes. These instruments are more complicated as the students have to remember the notes in their minds as there is no way to write them down. 5 months is simply not enough time for the students to feel that they have mastered even the basics of the instruments, so we really hope that these classes in particular can continue beyond the 20 week pilot project. It will be wonderful when these classes can play and feel proud of themselves, they just must learn to be patient and understand that to be an artist you must commit to studying. I believe that all the students in those classes are committed to their studies.

How to expand the project

After this pilot project I would love to continue for at least 6-12 months more because I think that for this program 20 weeks is not enough. This time is just a test and is introducing the students to the instruments. 20 weeks is not enough time for the students to master their instruments and become artists. I would like to suggest that during the next stage of the course the students can study at least 2 or 3 days per week and at least 2 hours per class. Although it is difficult to fit their lessons around their other studies they will only grow a true love if they understand the commitment that studying the arts takes.

If there is any chance that the students can have the opportunity then I would like to recommend that they have the chance to study all kinds of art forms. I would like to encourage the students to come and see exhibitions and performances in Phnom Penh so they can start to know and learn about the arts in society. I would encourage LaValla to have more partnerships with art organisations, arts companies and TV / media. A budget to support the transportation of this would be wonderful. I do believe that in the future some of the students in this program have the potential to become professional artists, become strong musical performers and will be able to give performances to members of the public. I hope that they will become strong role models to other young people with disabilities in Cambodia.