



# Tobin Music

ACCELERATING MUSIC LITERACY

## News

### CANDIDA TOBIN 1926 - 2008

Once met, never forgotten. Some people have this effect on us and Candida Tobin, who died on 14th December 2008 aged 82 was one of these people. Best known for her Tobin Music System, a method of teaching children of all ages and abilities, Candida was also a gifted composer, musician, publisher, teacher, entrepreneur besides being a wife and mother.

Candida was born in Chingford in 1926 and as she told us in her fascinating autobiography, *Lifting the Lid* (2003), as a young child she knew she had a mission in life and that there was something that she had to do. But first she had a life and career to build. Candida won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music at the age of sixteen but the family had to leave London during the Blitz and her musical education was cut short. At the end of the war, Candida had saved enough money (by making and selling brooches made from crab and sea urchin shells found on Suffolk beaches!) to pay for a first term at Trinity College London and so her typical determination and creative spirit were now apparent. After graduating, and marrying her first husband, Candida worked in a variety of jobs, but this included some music teaching. The marriage wasn't a success but Candida was acquiring a taste for teaching and after meeting John Tobin, her second husband and moving to Hertfordshire, she was given a job at Burnt Mill School in Harlow.

Over a short period, Candida developed the ideas and materials which form the core of her music teaching system; she discovered that the children could compose their own music and were actually enjoying their music lessons. From that point, Candida had found her mission: to teach, to train teachers and above all, to instil in as many people as possible a belief that they could make their own music. This mission often took Candida overseas, she lectured in Canada, Ireland, Australia, Europe and the USA. To this day teachers and parents from all over the world seek out her books and send messages of thanks for providing them with a magical musical toolkit.

This was to become her life's work, though there were many setbacks along the way Candida was not deterred from this path. She had the key ingredients essential in the music world; patience, perseverance and passion! Candida self-published over 40 books, including the *Wizard's Way* piano, 20 guitar and recorder books, developed award-winning interactive media materials (*Musicolour*, with Virgin) and formed many firm friendships with supporters and colleagues around the world. In 1972 Trinity College of Music recognised Candida's genius and awarded her with an honorary fellowship. Candida loved live music and somehow found time to create the Old Malthouse Music Society (named after her house in Sawbridgeworth and the venue for the concerts). Many of us were privileged to attend and enjoy performances from top-class musicians who were persuaded by Candida's wiles to come and provide us with unforgettable concerts.

As Candida entered her eighties, she was still working as hard as ever, but decided that she needed a Trust to support her in her work. The Tobin Music Trust was established in 2005 to perpetuate and promote her music teaching system and has helped Candida in gaining funding from the University of Hertfordshire for the production of a set of DVDs which show the system in action in a variety of schools – scripted by Candida. Renewed links with Trinity College London were also established. During that time, a cadre of dedicated music teachers has developed, led by Julie Hall, who are committed to the system and determined to spread the word that all children, of all abilities, can learn to read, write and compose music.

Candida became ill early in 2007 but bore her illness with typical humour, pragmatism and determination to make the most of her remaining months. She was an example to us all of how to live life to full, by giving rather than taking. Candida is survived by her daughter, Penelope and her son, Richard.

# TRIBUTES

*Upon meeting Candida in the summer of 2005 it was clear that she was a very kind and inspiring lady who loved life, her story was fascinating and her invention a phenomenon. Discovering the Tobin Music System was my epiphany; I had found the vital missing piece of my professional jigsaw. I was fortunate to see Candida teach and I admit to thinking 'Goodness me, she is a genius! I don't know if I can do this'. Within a split second I had made my decision – I wanted all of my pupils to be able to do this.*



*Candida's energy knew no bounds and her capacity to inspire and help teachers was remarkable. She worked constantly but made time for everyone, she saw the positive in everything and had the gift of making each one of us feel very special. I could hardly believe that this brilliant person actually wanted to share her life's work with me; no one had ever shown me how to teach. All of a sudden I was delivering brilliant lessons that delighted my students regardless of age, ability or wealth. I had found what I had always been looking for; a way to overcome the elitism in music education so that everyone can be musical – what a gift.*

*I was an apprentice embarking upon a big adventure! I used to think 'I'm just a music teacher; how on earth I can I help this formidable lady?' It was a journey of enlightenment that we likened to being on a rollercoaster, but we were on it together and Candida understood exactly what I was experiencing, she saw something in me that I never knew was there and she encouraged me, she became my dearest friend. Like everyone who has been taught by Candida my confidence developed and I soon had plans to bring musical literacy to a whole school, a whole county, the nation and of course overseas.*

*Therefore my role has become clear; to train and inspire a growing army of Tobin teachers and to pass Candida's legacy onto children everywhere. Her system is an invention of such magnitude that it will extend beyond one lifetime, it will grow, it will be shared and it will continue to bring enormous joy.*

*It was a privilege to be trained by Candida, to spend time with her and the greatest honour to be her friend.*

Julie Hall Licentiate Tobin Teacher PGCE BMus (Hons)

*We met Candida some time ago when she introduced her system of teaching music to us. From the moment she first entered our lives we realised that here was a person whose sole purpose was to develop a music teaching system that can be easily understood and within the reach of every person, regardless of background or knowledge of music composition.*

*Candida's enthusiasm was second to none as she tirelessly gave her time and efforts to the development of a system that is so simple and easily taught.*

*Sadly we witness the passing of this great lady and offer her family our sincere sympathies. However we also recognise the wonderful legacy Candida created and we are comforted in the knowledge that she will not be forgotten.*

*Dame Evelyn Glennie and her staff will continue to support Candida's work and those who now take up the reigns of bringing this exciting system into the public domain. A truly incredible woman of great faith, who took an idea, developed it and dedicated her life to bringing it to others so that they could share in the joy of creating and playing music.*

Dame Evelyn Glennie

*As I was raised and educated in a communist country under the Russian educational system (that produces a strong theoretical analysis of the role of instruction and proposed detailed practical analyses of the pedagogic implications of intellectual aspects of the content of instruction), my encounter with the Tobin system became a true revelation to me as a person and piano/recorder teacher.*

*This more humanistic type of approach that transforms main stream interpretation of a musical education couched in terms of the instructional transmission, into a form in which individual interpretation and response in a personalised pedagogy is seen as the way forwards towards the creation of a more autonomous form of schooling, is the way I see this system going way ahead of it's time.*

*My final thought would be towards the possibility of the Tobin Music System becoming a source of awakening, a centre and starting point of music education for future generations of educators. All educators agree that children can only be taught what has meaning for them. There can be no education without meaning and with the Tobin Music System we are providing children with a complete, dynamic and enlightened start to music.*

Aleksandra Andrijevic - Teacher/ Art Historian BA MA

*I was an ordinary primary school teacher, who had returned to work after having a baby. I was working very part time, one afternoon a week covering PPA time and teaching music from a scheme (that's right - Music Express - groan!). One day I was googling to see if I could improve on the lessons in the scheme and, whilst on the TES website, discovered a link to Tobin Music.*

*I found the promotional dvd and watched it and my stomach literally did a flip! - THIS was what I needed to be doing! THIS would turn my disengaged year 5s into inspired learners!*

*That was nearly 18 months ago. Since then I have undertaken training with Julie and Chris Hall to become an Associate Teacher, and had the honour of doing my presentation for module 5 in front of Candida herself. It was extremely nerve wracking, a bit like performing a piece of music when the composer is in the audience! But I did it and it made it extra special, because, without Candida and her wonderful system, I would still be wading through that awful scheme, still leaving lots of kids uninspired, and may even have given it all up as a bad job. Instead I have doubled my teaching time at the school, started a choir and a recorder club, and significantly raised the profile of music in the school.*

*As a result of all this I have also been taken on by a second school, where I teach the Tobin system one day a week. I am still learning, still coming up against red tape and bureaucracy, but I am light years ahead of where I would have been if it hadn't been for Candida. For that I owe her a huge amount. I am honoured and delighted that I found her and her system, and that I had the chance to meet her and tell her in person what it has all meant to me.*

Clare Wallington - Associate Tobin teacher

*Fifteen or twenty years ago I carried the Wizard Way recorder book 1 around with me as I struggled to teach my students using a variety of recorder books. 'Easy Recorder' 'Teach the Recorder' 'Easy tunes for the Recorder', etc. It took all of 5 or 6 years before I realised there must be an easier way. Every now and then I'd take a peep through The Wizard's Way. After suffering successive dropout averages over a few years, and my remaining students only poorly literate, I took a leap in the dark and adopted the Tobin System. My conversion was instantaneous. All other methods were discarded and I have not turned back since. My dropout rate was the greatest evidence of the success of the method; it shrank from 11% to 4 or 5% per class per year in any of the classes.*

Hubert Magee  
Mullingar, Ireland.

*I met Candida only twice but, in the space of one year, she has changed my teaching and my expectations of what children can achieve in music education. The most wonderful thing about this of course is that she has had this incredible effect on many people without ever meeting them and will continue to do so. The Tobin music system is simple yet revolutionary but it was only Candida's passion and commitment that meant it ever got out of Sawbridgeworth! Indeed, if she had listened to her critics, she may well have stopped teaching it at all but she had some really great attributes - self-belief, tenacity, confidence, creativity. She knew in her heart that she was right and that her system had integrity.*

*Candida was special; we must honour that indomitable spirit by shouting about the Tobin Music System from every rooftop we can find!*

Sharon Collier - Associate Tobin Teacher, Tamworth

*My first experience of the Tobin system was sitting wide eyed and open mouthed in front of my laptop whilst viewing the 20min online video demonstrating the system and the staggering heights that could be reached by school children of such a young age. This moment was certainly one of my most inspiring in terms of developing my own teaching and for opening up possibilities for children and young people who to date had found 'Music' (the subject taught at school) inaccessible. I confess at this stage, that as an adult with talent from childhood for 'picking things up by ear', I too was excited by the fact that many of the 'mysteries' of music theory were becoming unlocked before my very eyes!*

*I am proud to have completed the associate course and feel privileged to be able to say that I have shaken the hand of Candida Tobin after spending time in her company on a beautiful spring day earlier this year. She struck me as a woman of conviction, dedication and belief and she leaves behind a gift to all those who seek to unlock the mystery of 'Music' perpetuated in so many mainstream classrooms around the country.*

*I for one, am grateful for Candida 'Lifting The Lid' and allowing me to unlock the music potential of the young people I teach!*

Jayne Welsh - Associate Tobin Teacher

# FROM PARENTS AND PUPILS

*I met Candida Tobin in 1997 in search for a music teacher for my young children. Immediately, I was aware that this lady was going to have an impact on our lives. At first my husband could not comprehend why I was so excited by the system and this 'music teacher'. He now understands. I was mesmerized by the system as a musician and very soon the results were clear with the children's progress.*

*Visiting Candida weekly for lessons for many years I am pleased to say we developed a truly honest relationship. She was always caring with wonderful stories to tell and I was always ready to help if needed. The children have grown into teenagers with a true love for music and more importantly they too had the pleasure of knowing Candida – her love for life, her morals and recognize that she was very special.*

Cheryl Cruwys - Parent

*I began studying music with Mrs Tobin when I was 3 years old. I was timid and shy and spent many early Saturday mornings in lessons.*

*As a music scholar at Bishops Stortford College, I spend my school week attending music lessons, band and choir and I have become a confident person through my music. The Tobin music system will now continue to help me whilst I study music GCSE, in composition, improvisation and performing.*

*Mrs Tobin always understood that I enjoy all types of music, encouraging me to experiment, rather than just concentrating on exam pieces and classical.*

*I, therefore, choose to play in my free time, purely for fun and relaxing, and entertain my friends and family. Thanks to Mrs Tobin I am a musician and music will be with me, in my life forever. Thank you Mrs Tobin. x*

Ryan Cruwys (14) - pupil

*I spent 10 years attending Candida's Saturday morning classes with my three children and was so impressed with her system. I learnt a tremendous amount myself. Candida was charming, had a wonderful sense of humour and was very determined even in the last few days. She always knew when things were not quite right and tried to help if she could.*

Helen Smithers - parent

*I have known Candida for 12 years. She always seemed to talk to me at the right level. When I was little we had lots of fun with imaginary stories. As I became older I felt we were good friends. I particularly enjoyed playing in the master classes which she was kind enough to organise. We will all miss her."*

Robert Smithers (15) - pupil

*Candida was great fun and she has helped me with my understanding of music. I shall miss her lots. There is nobody to call me "Funny Bunny" any more. I shall never forget her.*

Stephen Smithers (11) - pupil

*Candida made music magical. She shared with me stories about music to describe how it should be played. I particularly liked Professor Wink (cat) and the jelly babies in her special pot.*

Rosie Smithers (9) - pupil

*My lessons with Candida were great fun. We composed a piece every lesson, sometimes Candida would play them on the piano. Candida worked us at GCSE standard but none of us realised that because she made it seem so easy. Candida was a great teacher of music, she could teach anyone and in a few years they could be top standard. Candida must have been one of the greatest music teachers in the world.*

Miles Bruce-Jones (11) - pupil

*I will never forget my theory lessons with Candida. We always had such fun and did something different every week. I particularly remember that when I was in my first few years of Candida's lessons, so I was quite young, at the beginning of each lesson we would sit on the carpet and pretend it was a magic carpet like in Aladdin. Candida would ask us what we could see down below as we flew and we would shout out things like 'a deer!' or 'a lake!' and Candida made it seem so real. There is no doubt that without Candida's teaching I would not be even close to the standard I am in music today. I think one of my lasting and most special memories of Candida would be when she took just me to a restaurant close by and taught me the difference between major and minor and the meaning of an accidental. When she felt I had learnt sufficiently what she had been teaching me she rewarded me with a cake of my choice which was double cream Mississippi pie!*

Georgia Bruce-Jones (15) - pupil

*I was taught recorder and musical theory by Candida. The lessons were always fun. We learnt everything so quickly and easily because of her teaching method and I still use the techniques today, especially in aural exams to help me remember rhythms. Candida was always very nice to us and called us her 'honeybunnies'. Candida is an inspiration to everyone.*

Toby Bruce-Jones (15) - pupil



*Candida taught me theory, recorder and the piano from the age of 4 until earlier this year when I was 16. In that time she gave me the basis for all my musical knowledge and much more. In my piano lessons Candida always pushed me to do better than I thought I could. She was always willing to lend me music, some of which I'm sure we still have! When I took up the clarinet and then the bassoon Candida showed a continued interest in my progress and even came to watch me perform. She was definitely more than a piano teacher; she was a music teacher in every sense of the word. Recently I had the opportunity to pass a little of the Tobin music system onto some young children with whom I volunteer. They learnt more in one two hour session than they had learnt in four or five years of school music lessons! Candida had an incredible amount of determination and passion about her system and she was an inspiration to me.*

Aphra Bruce-Jones (17) - pupil



Lecturing at Trinity College of Music



Candida with Lord Adonis & Mark Stringer at the House of Lords



Candida with Dame Evelyn Glennie, Julie Hall and Chris Hall



Spending time with the partners



## PROFESSOR WINKS .....AN UPDATE



So many people have asked about the much loved Professor that an update is necessary. He has relocated to Wellingborough to live with the Tobin family, he lives with Richard, Trisha, Lloyd and Esme.

Here is news of the Professor from Trisha Tobin:

*"To reassure everyone the Professor, 'Proffie' as he gets called by the children, is settling in well - we have installed an expensive bed which naturally he has no interest, plus the cats are all being calmed with 'Feliway' cat calming scent so they are really laid back and getting on very well. The Professor sends you all lots of love"*

### NEWS CONTRIBUTIONS

We would love to hear about your news and any outstanding pupils. Please send all contributions, of no more than 200 words, to [newsletter@tobinmusic.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@tobinmusic.co.uk)

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