

### Emenji: A Reflection

Ms Carolyn Royal

Emenji is a bit of a phenomenon, I guess. A group of young people - two of whom are now in their twenty-third year and most of whom sat with their legs crossed on the floor in a music room during their first year at school, with a 'newly converted to Orff Schulwerk' music teacher.



They survived the zeal and the relentless pursuit of the little brown books. Fancy trying to teach a group of young Australians, Cuckoo, Where are You? This they survived, with good humour, much like they are now, giving of their time to raise money for such things like Canteen, a support group for young cancer sufferers.

Emenji grew out of St. Thomas More's primary school on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria. Despite the blunderings of the music teacher, an extra elective instrumental and choral session and a recorder session had developed for interested students. Money was found for a fairly comprehensive Orff instrumentarium and we grew together.

When the first "batch" of these students left our school for secondary education, it was sad to hear what was happening to them. Recorder, of course, was ignored. They

were put in front of keyboards to play one finger melodies. In many cases these wonderful kids were 'kicked out' of the music class for 'bad behaviour'.

Nicole, one of the founding members, came to me after school one night, and said a few of them had been talking and asked if they could meet and "do some of the kind of music they had been doing at primary

school". She was given the task of talking to the other ex-students and finding out how many were interested in being involved. In a short time, the Monday Night Group was born.

In 1993, Suzie, another founding member of the group entered a public speaking contest and used her experiences in the Monday Night Group for her topic. It might be of interest here to include a little of what she said.

The Monday Nighters have achieved a great deal in the five years we've been going. We have performed at music conferences, at weddings and at concerts. We put on our own concert each year which is entirely a group effort. Perhaps a highlight of our time together was recording the Orff/Keetman, A Christmas Story. We combined with the primary school to produce an audio-cassette of this and we are very proud of the result.

When we first joined the group, the majority of us had no previous formal musical training and  
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most of us still haven't. However, some of us have gone on to lessons in year nine. I began percussion lessons in year nine and know that I learnt much easier as a result of my involvement with the Monday Night Group.

The aim of our group is not to perfect music, but to enjoy it. I hesitate to use the word 'rehearsal' to describe our meetings because although we do rehearse, this sounds so rigid and boring. We enjoy our rehearsals and have fun playing the music. It is something to look forward to each week, not something to dread. Everything about the Monday Nighters is informal and entertaining. You would have to be an exceptionally exhausted person to fall asleep during one of our concerts, as they are so alive and entertaining. There is a great deal of audience participation. We have even learnt to play folk dance music so we get everyone up to dance.

However, we have all gained to much more from the Monday Nighters than a great love of various music. We have learned leadership skills. We have learned co-operation with others and work as a team. We have gained the confidence to perform in front of people which is important for us in many facets of school life, including oral presentations and speeches (such as this). Two of us are now the school captains at our college. To its members, Monday Nighters is much more than a music group.

Not long after this speech was written, the subject of a suitable name for the group arose. Nothing seemed to fit. I have to confess that I picked the name of Emenji - for democracy had lapsed into indecision. We had always been known as the Monday Night Group so the initials M.N.G. became Em En Gee which looked just a trifle better as Emenji.

Cait, another younger member of the group also wrote an article, some of which is included below:

For over seven years, around fifteen teenagers have formed what is now known as Emenji. The group was initiated as an extension of our Orff-oriented music program at St. Thomas More's Primary School, Mt. Eliza, run by Carolyn Royal. Over the years, and with Carolyn's help we have become a close-knit and occasionally professional group of

musicians, constantly looking for new directions to take.

Our style, whilst definitely original, follows the example of influences such as Orff, African percussion, Blues, folk and World music (Stomp was purposely omitted - we were banging bin lids long before anyone knew of them in Australia). Many members of Emenji write and arrange pieces for the instruments we play (tuned and untuned percussion, guitar, woodwind and vocals) and the style we like to perform.



And perform we do - from school halls to TV studios, from "Help me Rondo" to "Summer is Icum In". We give our own concerts, perform at Orff conferences and of late, give workshops in primary schools. These are a definite favourite. The interaction with a different age group benefits and entertains us all.

The reception we receive is overwhelming. Our music provides a link between us and the kids, through which all involved can give and learn. These workshops are proof of the fact that music has the potential to touch and influence everyone, regardless of age, talent or experience.

The future of the group and the directions we will take, are unknown. As we, and our musical ability and style continue to grow, Emenji changes. Each member has vital input into the nature of these changes and in this way we have the chance to cultivate and explore our own aptitude and potential while contributing to the growth of Emenji as a whole. Belonging to the group is important to each of us. For many, it is the only way to continue and develop musical skills, and for others, it has become integrated into other areas of training and life itself. Above

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all, Emenji gives us a different way of growing, learning, and having fun. Cait Storr

The majority of the group is now at University. One has already graduated as an engineer, and only one, the 'baby' of the group is still at school. Despite the variety of work commitments, we still manage to fit in performances for schools and communities.

Meanwhile the "Ensemble Group", three recorder groups and a song and movement group continue to thrive and grow at St. Thomas More's. My "dream" would be that, in time, some of the members of Emenji will pick up the challenge and share their talents and enthusiasm with the next generation.



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