

Music colour lives on in Tobin legacy

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Tributes have been paid to music educator Candida Tobin, who died recently at the age of 82, having won a wide following for the teaching model she developed in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Tobin Music System encourages children as young as four to learn to read, play and compose music, which many of them are said to achieve by the age of eight.

The scheme assigns a colour to each note (A-G). After "learning" the colours, pupils then master concepts such as note length and chords.

The system won plaudits from musicians, including Dame Evelyn Glennie, the percussionist, and Feargal Sharkey, former lead singer of The Undertones and now chairman of the Government's Live Music Forum.

Colin Cooper, editor of Classical Guitar magazine, said: "I saw Candida in action, and there is no doubt in my mind that her system works very well in teaching the basics to young children.

"Her entire class of junior school children knew what a passing note is, and its function in composition. While I sat there, astonished, they composed a minuet. It sounded like Haydn, but the point was they understood the structure of the form. This was an amazing achievement for ordinary kids at junior school."

Mrs Tobin was active in supporting the teaching of the system into her 80s, and was working even in the week before she died, of cancer.

Julie Hall, who teaches the Tobin system in Warwickshire primary schools, said: "Candida was a genius in her field and leaves a legacy that will benefit teachers and children for future generations.

"I was fortunate to see Candida teach and lecture many times. Her ability to inspire and connect with children was sheer magic."

Dame Evelyn said: "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."

In 2005, a trust was set up to perpetuate and promote the system. Tobin Music is thought to be in use in around 50 schools.

Mrs Tobin, who published more than 40 books, was an honorary fellow of London's Trinity College of Music.

She is survived by her daughter, Penelope, and her son, Richard.