

Music Class Has It Made With Shades

Instructor says color code helps notes stick better with students.

When **Shiho Yamamoto** was in preschool in Japan, she learned about musical notes through an unusual system of colors associated with each note: a C on the C major scale is red, D is yellow and so on.

Not only is it an easy way to learn the notes, but, she said, “once young children learn the notes with these colors, they don’t forget them.”

Yamamoto, 48, has turned this simple technique – which she calls “color soundation” – into the cornerstone of a growing music education empire.

She started by teaching small groups of students in her West L.A. home, then



Taking Cues: Conservatory of Performing Arts' Shiho Yamamoto with students.

opened a studio 13 years ago in Westwood – now the **Conservatory of Performing Arts** – and another in Torrance seven years ago. She has since trained dozens of teachers and now licenses her method to some 50 preschools and music schools in the United

States, Japan, Indonesia and other countries.

More than 1,000 children have learned their musical notes through Yamamoto’s method. She said it’s been especially rewarding to see some color soundation students become professional musicians, but that’s not what drives her.

“Teaching young children about music gives them all sorts of skills they will use later in life, even if they don’t become musicians,” she said.

Now Yamamoto is turning her attention to local public schools, where music education has been in steep decline. Her Westwood studio has contracts to send teachers into three charter schools in East Los Angeles, and she is hoping that number grows.

“We hope to reverse the decline of music education in public schools,” she said.

– Howard Fine