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THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN GENERAL EDUCATION

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The benefits of education and of useful knowledge, generally diffused through a community, are essential to the preservation of a free government.

Sam Houston

Cultivated mind is the guardian genius of Democracy, and while guided and controlled by virtue, the noblest attribute of man. It is the only dictator that freemen acknowledge, and the only security which freemen desire.

Mirabeau B. Lamar

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Foreword

This bulletin contains the complete address of Dr. Hobart H. Sommers, nationally known music educator, which he delivered at the University Interscholastic League Breakfast in San Antonio, November 28, 1947.

Dr. Sommers was the first supervisor of instrumental music in Chicago schools, and has been successively an elementary school principal, a college dean and a high-school principal. He has also served on the faculties of the Chicago Teachers' College, Northwestern University, the American Conservatory of Music, and was for five years head of the public schools music department of the Chicago Musical College.

At the present time he is principal of Austin High School, Chicago, Ill., the largest secondary school in the state, with a current enrollment of 6,000 pupils. He is the author of three books on mathematics, including the well known text, *Use of the Slide Rule*.

Dr. Sommers was the first vice-president of the North Central Music Educators Conference in 1935-36, and at the present time is chairman of the vocal section of the Illinois Federation of Music Clubs. He has also received recognition for his ability as a "narrator" with various symphony orchestras.



Director.

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Role of Music in General Education

Some members of this audience will remember with enthusiasm the works of that sterling novelist of their youth, Horatio Alger, Jr. One book was never enough. Every new volume that could be obtained was saved for the evening turn next to the family kerosene lamp. Each story followed an established pattern in which the poor but honest lad (never a girl if I remember), by hard work and sincere effort, finally achieved his goal of wealth and honor in this glorious land of opportunity.

The author never permitted his reader to forget for a moment his theme of great opportunity combined with individual aggressiveness resulting in the triumphant achievement of American democracy. Whether we appreciate the approach of Mr. Alger, or whether we view with doubt his method of educating the rugged individualist, you will agree that the challenge of the geographical frontiers of the last half of the nineteenth century has been met and conquered.

NEW FRONTIERS

A new business and economic frontier almost immediately took its place. With the advance in science and industrial efficiency in the last fifty years, the economic frontier itself has been largely conquered so that today, in these more or less United States, we are able to agree generally on three things: First, that we would like to retain all the privileges we have; second, that we would all like to have those privileges that only a few enjoy; and third, that our real frontiers are those of human relationships.

All educators have come to realize today that the inherent aggressiveness of Americans is a challenge and a problem. It is the reason we have turned from the educational diet of the 1900 school which had a fare originally designed for preachers, lawyers, doctors, and teachers. It is the reason that we include a broad program of sports in our curriculum, the reason why we have developed art and music programs. It

is the reason why I am here today to discuss with you an important aspect of the activity program.

At the present we are in the midst of a re-examination of the bases of our educational system, for even the Chamber of Commerce will admit that more has been discovered about learning in the past fifty years than in all the centuries before. Our schools are changing and will continue to change. We must evaluate these changes with care, ever mindful of the fact that in a changing society the policies of education often endure even after they have outlived their usefulness.

EDUCATION PROBLEMS ARE COMPLEX

Our search for the truth of what our curriculum should contain requires acquaintanceship not only with the frontier thinker, but needs to be guided by present day living experiences and critical thinking in a tone of spiritual progress. Education problems today are not simple, as the relationship in all avenues of both national and international life are not only changing, but are becoming so increasingly complicated that they are difficult to distinguish.

We do know that the curriculum of today must attempt to solve the problems of the present. It must indicate the proper patterns of ethical behavior and recognize that we are teaching the child today for his life tomorrow. This means that educators must look for today's guidance in the light of tomorrow's needs. It often means breaking the acceptances of today and running the gauntlet of opposition which is usually supported by those who finished their education yesterday.

Music education has always had an important place in the curriculum of democracies. The creative genius of the ancient Greeks expressed itself in artistic achievement as well as other more familiar fields. Their art and music were bound up with religious and civic life, with poetry, drama and music closely allied to the religious festivals which were the heart and soul of national aspiration.

The Greeks evidently felt that music was related to good moral qualities and insisted that a good citizen was one who participated actively in the artistic life of the time. But early

fine arts were not organized into systematic bodies of knowledge, and the education of citizens in the realm of music after an interesting beginning began to decline in the third and fourth centuries. Music was justified by Plato and Aristotle because of its mathematical content only and the practice of playing music was disparaged as against the theoretical.

This passing reference to the early Greek music education should not be taken lightly as the Athenian type of school lasted for over 800 years, and passed on its philosophy to the Roman world and to the Renaissance.

PLATO MOTIVATED BY CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

Perhaps the thing to remember about the references to education in Plato's "Republic," which was a blueprint for a proposed ideal state, is that Plato paid little attention to the education of the masses of people who did the work of the world. He was interested only in the education of the ruling or warrior class, but emphasized that education was important, not only in molding character but also in acting as a primary selective agency by means of which the most able are brought to light.

It is evident that some of Plato's followers in higher institutions have overlooked his evident class consciousness in giving this early philosopher credit for the thought that a well-rounded development of the individual with music and physical education is a means of developing character, personality and leadership in the people.

The role of music in general education has changed little in the twenty-five centuries since the Greek Republic emphasized the fact that planned education was the foundation not only of progress but also the path of continued existence.

The introduction of music in the public schools of America can be traced very definitely to the need for better congregational singing in the Protestant churches of New England. In the years following the close of the Revolutionary War, when the colonies began to breathe easier, the formation of singing schools was an expression of the growing artistic life of this early period.

MUSIC ADDED TO CURRICULUM IN 1832

In 1832 the first petition requesting that music be added as a regular subject in the public schools was presented to the School Board in Boston, Massachusetts. A special committee of the board was obtained to consider the memorial and this committee submitted an elaborate report in 1837.

The report went as follows:

“Let music be examined by the following standards:

“1. Intellectually, music had its place among the seven liberal arts, which scholastic ages regarded as pertaining to humanity. Memory, comparison, attention, intellectual faculties—all of them are quickened by a study of its principles.

“2. Morally, it is unphilosophical to say that exercises in vocal music may not be so directed and arranged as to produce those habits of feeling of which these sounds are the type. Happiness, contentment, cheerfulness, and tranquility—these are the natural effects of music.

“3. Physically, it appears self-evident that exercise in music, when not carried on to an unreasonable excess, must expand the chest and thereby strengthen the lungs and the vital organs. Judging then by this triple standard, intellectually, morally and physically, vocal music seems to have a natural place in every system of instruction which aspires to develop man’s whole nature.”

In September of 1837 this report was considered and adopted by the school board, but the City Council failed for some reason to make the expected appropriation which was needed to give the plan its legal sanction. Whereupon Lowell Mason, the leading spirit in public school music at the time, offered to give his services as teacher of music for one year in one of the schools of the city and furnish his own books and equipment.

TODAY’S PROGRAM FAR-REACHING

Seven principles were formulated by Lowell Mason as statements of the aims and purposes of school instruction of music. These are interesting because our present day program is so

much more far-reaching in scope than the limited objectives of that period. These are the seven:

"1. To teach sounds before signs—to make the child sing before he learns the written notes or their names.

"2. To lead him to observe, by hearing and imitating sounds, their resemblances and differences, their agreeable and disagreeable effect, instead of explaining these things to him—in short, to make him active instead of passive in learning.

"3. To teach but one thing at a time—rhythm, melody, expression being taught and practiced separately before the child is called to the difficult task of attending to all at once.

"4. To make them practice each step of each of these divisions, until they are master of it, before passing to the next.

"5. To give the principles and theory after practice, and as an induction from it.

"6. To analyze and practice the elements of articulate sound in order to apply them to music.

"7. To have the names of the notes correspond to those used in instrumental music."

One of the basic problems of teachers today is to discover for each individual his particular aptitudes for life and every day work and by the best methods available bring to light the hidden patterns for future growth. May I point out that the modern education music program has inherited ideas not only from the philosophy of the ancient Greeks, and our early American educators, but also from the "learn by doing" philosophy of John Dewey and William Kilpatrick.

John Dewey's concept of education has been based on the premise that growth and change decide what is socially valuable with intelligence and experience determining the goals toward which our society aims.

MUSIC DEVELOPS RIGHT ATTITUDES

Education has a broader responsibility today than to teach "subjects." If there is one great responsibility for all American teachers at the present time, it is the responsibility to understand that we must accept today the challenge to develop

attitudes of living through every subject of the curriculum. It is my contention and that of all music educators that a proper music program lends itself more readily to the development of these necessary attitudes than many other purely academic studies.

There is a unique opportunity in the responsibility of the program of American music education. Here is a program that is unlike any other in our formal education, for here you may teach and at the same time have an opportunity to see the results of your teaching expressed in a creative way. Only through some formal exercises can the Latin student ever see or hear the actual results of his four years of study in that subject. But the music teacher, after bringing home the lesson through the lyric or the phrase of the music, can give her group and others an opportunity to see and hear a creative use of the activity resulting from the learning situation.

Psychologists tell us that only when a pupil can see the relationship between learning and the uses of learning, does practice have a chance to make perfect. To see such relationships requires intelligence that must be developed by the good teacher. This is why schools which lean on a few subjects and a few books to teach everything have been successful only with "bookish" people.

MUSIC TEACHES WORLD CITIZENSHIP

With the possibilities of teaching creative expression and co-operation, American music education can blend in naturally with the new patterns of education emerging in all parts of the world. The music activities in our schools epitomize the idea of doing things. The student learns that if he wants to get anything out of music he almost has to do something himself. If you want to enjoy listening you must bring to that listening some background of understanding. To gain anything from a band and orchestra you must do something in order to justify your membership. To enjoy the activities of an a cappella choir or a boys' glee club, the singer must work in harmony with his group. This need for active co-operation is a great contribution of music education to American educa-

tion. It is probably one of the reasons why music education looms so large in the cultural plans of our schools. I can remember when educators justified music activities as helpful in character building. Now we realize that music teachers have the responsibility to teach the conception of world citizenship.

Democracy, if it is to function, must be concerned with two conditions: The first is the need for universal education, and the second is the necessity that this education must concern itself not merely with applications of science, literature, and music, but also the implication of these studies to man's basic beliefs concerning the nature of himself. Education is an essential instrument to make democracy function and nothing can do more harm than the thesis so popular with many leaders that science, art and music, or anything else may be taught in a neutral manner with respect to human values. For a properly nourished man, art and music are not luxuries or afterthoughts. Instead, they become a concrete necessity, just as important food for his emotional and intellectual nature as vitamins are for his physical organism.

Edmund W. Sinnott, director of Yale's famous Sheffield Scientific School, said recently at the centennial celebration of that institution:

"Science is modern, popular and dominant. It cannot help being tempted to a certain arrogance and a conviction that the keys of truth are in its hands alone. (But) logic and reason are no monopoly of science. . . .

SPIRITUAL VALUES IMPORTANT

"Let us face the fact that what the world must have is a fuller cultivation of those qualities which are best termed spiritual. Whatever we may think as to their origin, as scientists, we should no longer sneer at them; for on their strength depends our own survival. Man leads a double life, of mind and spirit. If mind is suspect, man may become a creature only of his instincts; if spirit is suspect, as today when scientific materialism carries such authority, he is in danger of degenerating into a selfish and soulless mechanism. To be a whole man, he must cultivate both parts of him."

Much of the tradition of music education has been built on the assumption that each generation of Americans will live substantially among conditions similar to those which governed the lives of their fathers, and furthermore, that they will be able to transmit the same conditions with equal force to the lives of their children. This is a period of human history when the accelerated tempo of living under the extreme pressure of technological inventions has almost out-stripped our power of adjustment. Music education must adjust its appreciation aims to the twenty-four hour radio and newest gadgets of television.

I can remember not too many life-times ago when the invention of the phonograph brought music appreciation into our schoolrooms, together with the great orchestras and great voices of that era. Many instructors were all too willing to sit back and let the voice of the artist do the job for music. Again, when radio broadcasts began to come in, many teachers took advantage of the opportunity to sit back and let this new medium do the work. May I say to all of that group of educators, there is no substitute for the activity of the learner. Passive education has no place in the picture of 1947 America. There must be life, activity, and progress in all of our work if we are to struggle through the challenge of this period.

MODERN YOUTH DISTURBED

The young people in our schools in this era of immense technological advance are often in a quandary about society's need for them. All human beings, young and old, need to know and feel that they are important to someone, some cause, or some activity. With improvements in education many homes relax the feeling of responsibility for the young people when they are in their early teens especially where the mothers as well as fathers are employed. Our young people are often cynical, rebellious and discouraged. They need something to be active about, something to do that is worthwhile with a chance to serve. We believe that with music in the education program it can be more than a voicing of a student's own innate sense of beauty. Education fails of its

cultural objectives unless it brings to every child the feeling that he himself may find satisfying expression through the arts.

Paul Mort says in his new book "A Look At Our Schools,"

"A world like ours needs in its work tens of thousands of differing human capacities. For there has never been a time in history when there were more things which needed to be done well. Just since the turn of the century new social, mechanical, scientific, commercial, and technical ways of doing things have made a staggering addition to the talents required to live and work in our civilization. Human beings have shown themselves the possessors of talents hardly dreamed of a century or two ago. There has been no new machine, no new gadget, no new process, but that someone became an expert with it."

TEACHERS MUST DISCOVER APTITUDES

One of the basic problems of teachers today is to discover for each individual his particular aptitudes for life and for work, to probe within the unfolding chrysalis of youth and bring to light by the best methods available the hidden pattern of future growth.

Those of us who are interested in the progress of activity in education have become concerned regarding the great development in the business of spectator sports in this country. Although the sporting goods people tell us there is a market of eight million people who spent some twenty billion dollars on sports, only about sixteen million dollars is spent for golf balls, and only about ten million for baseballs. The largest percentage of that twenty billion dollars goes for admission charges to professional or amateur competitions. Certainly some of these millions of spectators would be interested in doing something themselves. It has been truly said that the advance of civilization in the future is going to depend a good deal upon what we do with our time off. Education for the worthy and purposeful use of leisure time is still one of the cardinal points of education.

I can remember writing a sketch for a convention for the Western Society of Engineers, which was held in Chicago in May, 1927, more than twenty years ago. They had a new and daring idea. Base a one act play on the idea that efficiency could cut our work week down, not to a five-day week, but to a five-hour week. This was considered a great joke in 1927, but it is not too funny today, as our advance in science has indicated labor saving of such great extent that we may well have a five-hour week in the future.

More leisure time should lead invariably to the increase of creative work. The creative process, whether in art, music or industry, cannot be taught. Our responsibility lies in the provision of the opportunity of growth, providing the materials with which to work, the sympathy, understanding and confidence needed by the urge for expression.

EDUCATOR SHOULD INTERPRET MUSIC

It is part of the job of the modern educator to interpret the world to the student. The job of interpreting modern or popular music to the student, who usually only gets classical music in his school life, has not been too well done by many of us. Probably some of us do not have a good enough background to bring about a proper understanding between popular and classical music. To argue that even if pupils do not like classical music, it is good for them is to acknowledge at once that our lessons of appreciation have been a total failure.

We, as educators, often fail to realize the great effect that the moving pictures have on our young people's lives. Columbia's "A Song to Remember," built on the story life of Chopin, brought Jose Iturbi's piano to many thousands of people who had never liked classical music before. The story of George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" made a definite link in the minds of our young people between the tin-pan alley of today and the great music of the past.

Industry is always recognized at every educational convention. Addresses will be entitled "Art in Industry," "Language Training for Industry," "Fundamental Mathematics for the Business World," or the "Communicative Arts

in Business.” Music also has its place in business and as such must have an equal place in general education. Sound equipment systems are made by over fifty different firms for daily use in industrial plants. Many modern organizations have music played to factory workers on the job. Music is used for recreation periods and in employees’ dining rooms. Efficiency directors tell us that the industrial music programs do three things:

1. Music relieves the fatigue boredom of work,
2. Daily music increases the good will and the morale of the worker, and
3. It reduces absenteeism, lateness and griping over details.

THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF MUSIC

The therapeutic value of music in mental cases as shown in hospitals during and since the war alone gives music an important role in education.

At present there are 700,000 mental patients in institutions occupying 52% of available hospital beds. Four million are being cared for and six million more are border line cases.

Music has been found to have a great therapeutic value in rehabilitating mental cases as it affects the body, mind and spirit.

If music can heal, perhaps it can help *prevent*. Music is not like science which can totally destroy man if not directed properly, but like medicine and religion it can be made the servant of man.

May I make a few suggestions for a good school music program? First, there must be a willingness to build a good music program on the part of the Superintendent and the Principal of the school. The administrative head of the school must be not only interested in the program, but must be willing to give it time and energy. He should encourage contests and activities and not complain that this program is interfering with academic work. We administrators are coming to understand that although fundamentals of education are needed for future success in business and higher education, yet without

the binding agent of the activity program the ability to use these fundamentals will be undeveloped.

TRAINED MUSIC TEACHERS NEEDED

Second, *excellent* music teachers are needed for an adequate program. Ordinary teachers who are unable to organize and direct real activities will be left behind. A mediocre teacher can often get by in Latin, English, or mathematics because the next semester teacher can often make up what is lost. There can never be a lost semester in music because each term must be creative in itself and a lost term is a lost group.

Third, the music program must be thoroughly understood by those of the administrative staff charged with arranging the programs of students and teachers. It must be understood that a proper offering of music in a modern school provides a large selection for those who want much, but at least something for every student. Program writing should also be viewed from the viewpoint of equality of subjects. When a high school offers only one or two subjects such as French VI, Latin VIII, Sociology, or Trigonometry, the program should see that these are not placed in the same period as the concert orchestra, the a cappella choir, or the marching band.

Fourth, the writing of the school program for the music department should not be left for the music teacher to adjust after the beginning of the semester. The music program of each child should be written long in advance with the activities spotted first on the individual program and the fundamentals written in around them.

Fifth, this same courtesy should be extended to other activities, especially the athletic groups where football, basketball, baseball, stage crew, dramatics, ballet, and wrestling need school time. The importance of these activities demand that these be spotted on a student's program first, with English, biology, physics and history placed in the periods that remain.

PAY TEACHERS FOR "OVERTIME"

Sixth, all teachers connected with performances outside of school hours should be paid for their work. This includes not only coaches and ticket sellers at athletic games, not only con-

ductors and accompanists at concerts, but also the teachers keeping order in the dressing rooms or doing the work behind the scenes. If the budget of the Board of Education does not provide for these funds, it seems to me that they must be supported by the activities themselves. If a plumber, carpenter, or street car conductor is paid for extra work, there is no reason why professionally trained teachers should year after year donate their spare time to an unappreciative community that does not consider their time worthy of pay. If it is worthwhile they should be paid for it. If it is not worth paying the teacher, it certainly should not be in the school program.

Conversely, if the activity of the school cannot afford to pay the teachers necessary for afternoon, evening and Saturday activities, then the activity is a losing proposition and should be abandoned until it can support itself. Our fellow teachers in the academic department often build up a dislike for music activities because they feel they are forced to work overtime for someone else's glory. By paying teachers on a business basis there will be a startlingly new appreciation of the athletic and music program.

Seventh, no music program that is as far-reaching and effective as the program you laid down here in Texas for the contests and activities of the University Interscholastic League will ever do the things you wish to accomplish until every teacher in the schools understands the principles and the background of the entire program. Full publicity should be given to teachers as well as the public to acquaint everyone with the aims and purposes of your plan.

Eighth, the question of music credit must be solved to the satisfaction of all concerned. This includes students, the public, the faculty, and the University. The success of the veterans who have taken the G.E.D. tests for their high-school diplomas and have gone on to do college work indicates that our conception of units and credits may be changing, and that art, music and physical education activities may have the same cumulative value as classes in Cicero and solid geometry. In the new curriculum to come one of the problems will be to evaluate the credit system established under our interlocking

accrediting agencies for secondary education in the United States.

ROLE OF MUSIC IN SOCIAL SET-UP

You will all agree that education is always a part of the civilization which it represents. You will also agree that there always has been a flow and counterflow of ideas between the changing American society and the American school. Many of us have come to realize that the role of music in general education is to assist in the increase of the flow of ideas between the schools themselves and the activities of society. The purpose of public education is to mold a people and contribute to individual effectiveness and happiness in order to *understand* clearly the true relationship between the realistic success of American material achievements and the corresponding possibilities in the realm of human rights.

Do you remember Elmer Rice's play *THE ADDING MACHINE*, which takes the hero with the unimportant name of Mr. Zero, through the last years of a drab life finally landing him in heaven? When he gets there, he learns that he has to go back and begin all over again as a baby. He will grow up and be sent to school, where "they'll tell you the truth about a great many things that you don't give a damn about, and they'll tell you lies about all the things you *ought* to know—and about all the things you *want* to know they'll tell you nothing at all. When you get through you'll be equipped for your life-work. You'll be ready to take a job."

American education has had the same failing as many individuals. With the inferiority complex born of our frontier past, we have often been afraid to do the best that we know how. Music education in our public schools is part of the best that we know and we should not be afraid to acknowledge its importance.

"LIGHT, HEAT AND POWER"

Not very long ago I was thinking of a proper conclusion for such remarks as these while on a train going through Kansas City. As we pulled out of the station in the twilight

of a spring afternoon I saw in the distance the advertising sign of the local Edison Company. It flashed on and off: Light, Heat and Power. This was the theme I was looking for, the keynote to the music program in our schools; music to bring a light that we may see the possibilities of a people living in a world of divergent ideas; music for the warmth of understanding, tolerance and sympathy; music for the power to appreciate and understand the creative work of others. All hail to the light, the heat and the power of music.

