

MUSIC IN THE EDUCATION OF THE COMMON MAN

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AMONG the Greeks, the Hebrews and the Oriental peoples of antiquity, the place of music and art in the education of youth was an honorable and indispensable one. When the first universities were established in Europe, music occupied an important place in the curriculum. Harvard, our first American institution of higher learning, when it was founded more than two hundred years ago, included music among the courses offered. But our Puritan forefathers had a deep-rooted antipathy to anything which smacked of levity or which bore any trace of the former things against which Puritanism was a protest. They frowned upon music except the singing of psalm tunes and made it illegal for any man to be a musician by trade in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay. Consequently, the cultivation of music in secular life died out entirely during the seventeenth century and, even in connection with the church services, the number of tunes in common use dwindled to a mere handful. Fortunately for the cause of music in America, the eighteenth century saw a decided change, even in New England's attitude toward music and Boston, Charleston, S. C., Philadelphia, New York became the centers which kept thoroughly abreast with the musical development, at least of England, and which had the opportunity to enjoy creditable performances of concert-music and English operas then in vogue in London.

In the main, however, it was not until well along in the nineteenth century that musical culture began to reoccupy its former place in the social and educational scheme; and much credit is due to Dr. Lowell Mason and his associates and disciples in the public schools and to Dr. John K. Paine, who for so many years held up the torch in Harvard University. Looking backward twenty to twenty-five years, the development of musical activity both as an art and as an educational force has been prodigious. One can scarcely realize how few public schools and colleges or universities even a generation ago paid any attention at all to the serious study of music and how fewer still treated it as of equal importance with the other educational features.

It is no longer a question whether music shall enter the educational scheme. The important problem before educators now is the basis upon which it shall enter and the place which it shall occupy in education. It is not even a question as to the type of professional training which the music student should undergo or any of the other important matters entering into the education and exploiting of performers and leaders. It is a much bigger and in some respects a much more complex problem; and in it are involved the nature of music and its part in the life of the common citizen as well as the best method of giving to the common citizen the training which he should have. This again raises the question of the extent to which the energies of public education should be applied to musical education. In other words, how far is the State justified in offering free instruction in music? These are important questions, and it is high time that some sort of agreement be arrived at, among musicians at least, in order that the maximum of progress may be made with the minimum of lost motion. While there is much energy expended in planning and carrying out musical education for professional purposes there is not as yet a great deal of concentration upon any single line of action which would represent the consensus of opinion of the thinking teachers and which would, therefore, presumably form the most profitable basis upon which to proceed in musical education for the layman.

What has music to contribute to the common citizen? Why should he spend his time and energy and why should the community spend its money on musical education for his sake? What should he get out of it? First, let me call attention to the disciplinary and intellectual value of music,—not because this is the highest use to which music can be put, but because it is the side which appeals most directly and most forcibly to the trained educator. The great bulk of school teachers still maintain the old-fashioned point of view,—that the value of a course lies in large measure in the mental discipline which it affords,—and such courses which are of purely practical value are even yet in their eyes more or less step-children in the educational scheme. Their attitude is as though one were to insist that the virtue of food lies in the eating, not in its value to the system. We know what such a point of view carried out in practice would do to our systems, and we have a few rather unpleasant words which we apply to the people who “live to eat.” I am inclined to believe that the music teacher is not particularly sympathetic with the attitude of the educational world in this particular, for, while,

of course, discipline is necessary for the acquisition of the ability which we call "technique," yet, as Hamlet said, "The play is the thing"; and we are inclined to measure the success or failure of any teacher by the ability of his pupils to *make* music. However, the music teacher is working more and more with the teaching world at large, and he must learn to accept its point of view and to adapt himself to that prevailing in the larger scheme. Therefore, he might as well make the most of the value of music study as "discipline." This value is undoubted, and it will open many a door to him which otherwise would be fast closed. After all, if he desires to teach music (and he feels that he should) to the children in the schools, he must first obtain the permission and coöperation of the authorities, and he must obtain that permission and coöperation on any basis which he has in common with them. Therefore, he must be careful to see that the music teaching which he does will bear the scrutiny of men and women who are in the habit of analyzing methods and who look for results in discipline from any course to which they give their approval.

This is not in the least difficult, for we all realize that the good drill-master of a chorus or orchestra has his performers as completely under control as a colonel his regiment. The difficulty comes rather in the more intimate relationships between teacher and student in the classroom. Here, where the groups are smaller and where interest in the material is very likely to outweigh the interest in manner of presentation, the teacher must be careful that his work is as accurate and painstaking and pedagogically correct as would be expected by the superintendent of schools from his teacher of arithmetic or reading of Latin. In other words, as an educator, he must not fall short in any detail of the standards to which his colleagues, teaching other subjects, are required to measure up; for if he does fall short he, to that extent, minimizes the value of music educationally and his own success as a member of the teaching force of the institution.

There are still a great many people whose education was obtained under the old regime which put culture first. These people underwent the discipline of which I have just spoken, but with the discipline went the acquisition of a large store of the traditional learning and literature of the world. Their culture formed a common basis upon which men and women might get together and exchange ideas and experiences and upon which they might build the specialistic training which earned them their livelihood or gave them their professional standing. The advocates of the humanities in education are still numerous and

influential, and their case is a strong one. Some of them are not, alas, awake to the value of music and the kindred arts in a cultural scheme of education, but, in the main, the advocates of this system find a place, if not one of first importance, for music, at least as an accomplishment. Now one of the purposes of an accomplishment is to make its possessor socially more agreeable, to smooth the pathway for social intercourse, and to serve in many cases as a point of contact between people who might otherwise find nothing in common. It might seem somewhat absurd for a musician to urge this as an argument in favor of music in the education of the common man, yet we know what an important part social intercourse plays in all human activities; how a "good mixer", as we call him, has valuable assets quite apart and distinct from his technical knowledge or his professional skill; how much of business, politics, even government, depends upon the personal equation. How can it be possible that an element so important in the getting on of a man should receive so little of attention as it does in our educational scheme? Music is by common consent an "open sesame." We all know the familiar story of our great millionaire who is reputed to have won his way as a young man to the heart of his employer and later to preferment through his singing and playing of folk-songs. Even from a purely mercenary point of view, the ability to sing and play and the acquaintance with at least familiar musical literature are of undoubted value to every man and woman in this important direction.

But to proceed a step further, the value of music to the common man is much greater than we are in the habit of realizing from the standpoint of what it does for his leisure. We are told that the average young person is very thoughtlessly laying up for himself a most stupid old age, that, through his neglect of literature and art, through his insistent craving for action and excitement, through his apparent refusal to think, he is robbing himself of all of the important assets which a man needs when, for any reason, he is cast on his own resources by illness or misfortune or old age. Perhaps the real situation is not so alarming as appears on the surface, yet, there seems to be no doubt that, except for music, very many of our young people have none of the traditional assets along that line. All the more reason, therefore, why, at the impressionable age, the mind and heart of every child should be stored full of the resources which music can give. An education is not for a day nor merely for the purpose of enabling one to make a living. As the life is more than the raiment, so an education should and must prepare the youth to meet all the relations of

life; and the most important of all relations any man has to meet is that with himself. A vapid, empty personality must be, in the last analysis, the most awful thing to which its possessor can be doomed; and it is a part of our education so far as possible to save our young people from such a fate.

Of course, the State has a right to ask of any of the courses included in the educational curriculum "What do *I* get out of this?"—"What does this particular subject contribute toward good citizenship and efficiency?" Here, I believe, the advocate of music in education has one of his strongest arguments. A singing nation is not likely to be anarchistic. Music and good order go together. In its very essence, music makes for those things which are good and uplifting and is opposed to those which degrade and set people against each other. I am aware that there are some recent manifestations of the musical art which would seem to disprove this assertion and that the choir gallery is usually called the "war department" of the church, but it would not be difficult to explain away these apparent discrepancies. Without the slightest doubt, music is one of the strongest influences for law and order and right living which have yet been turned loose in our modern civilization, and its intimate relation with religion and patriotism serves simply to illustrate how true this is.

Assuming then that music has a place in public education and that it is the right and privilege of every boy and girl to receive as part of the general training a specific routine in music, there remain yet two important matters to be considered: first, the proportion of such training and, second, the form that it should take. The proportion of music work as compared with the sum total would probably vary considerably with each individual outlining the course,—but then that is not peculiar with music. An enthusiastic mathematician can wax eloquent over equations, while the enthusiastic agriculturalist will sing of corn and hogs in lays befitting a minstrel. The man whose heart is not in his work minimizes the importance of that work; so I have no quarrel with the musician who wants to include more music training in the scheme of things than the general public is willing to accept. Surely if *he* is not enthusiastic about musical education, nobody else may be expected to be. However, it is only fair to state as a fundamental requirement that the music in a public school education shall serve the same general purpose as any other element in that education.

The high school does not pretend to turn out specialists in English or mathematics or manual training or domestic science.

Its business is to furnish an all-round basis upon which the higher and specialistic development may gradually be built. In the same way the music teachers in the public schools have no right to aim at nor to expect preparation, even in a slight degree, for professional activity in the young men and women who have completed the high-school course. The aim of the music teaching in the schools should be, first, an acquaintance with some of the best musical literature and some idea as to its standards. Necessarily the music must be adapted at all points to the mind of the child, so that while the child in the lower grades may feel most at home with simple ditties on a par with "Mother Goose" and the other literature which is dear to the childish heart, the taste gradually forms and matures until the high-school boy and girl ought, if properly led to it, be able to appreciate the Classics in music quite as much as in literature. This does not in any sense presuppose nor include intensive technical training. It means acquaintance with the compositions themselves rather than the attempt on the part of the immature child to perform such compositions adequately. You may call it "Appreciation" or anything else you please, but *this to my mind is the first and most important thing that needs to be done along the line of music study in our schools.*

Hand in hand with this must go a study of music-reading; for who ever heard of a person who pretended to be even slightly educated who could not read at least his own language? I am utterly out of sympathy with any system of education which does not provide, as a fundamental, good sight-reading. We cannot hope to have educators take us seriously if this most indispensable element is omitted from the training of our children. But I am just as thoroughly out of sympathy with that form of music study which consists in training the helpless child to do "stunts." There was a time that some of us can remember when it was customary to exploit the physical training work, when every commencement or other entertainment had to have its dumb-bell-drill or some other similar exhibition. It was in the days when physical training was on probation, when it had to make its appeal. Now that physical training is a part of the curriculum in every well-organized school, we spend less time in "stunts" and more in making the work constructive and adapting it to the needs of the individual. It is about time that we treat music study in the same way.

The proportion of music study to the total amount of time expended by the pupil ought, undoubtedly, to be considerably

larger than it is at present in the average school. I fear there are too many school systems where even yet the musical period is considered of value chiefly because it serves as a period of relaxation which for the time-being diverts the children and makes them the fresher for the (supposedly) more serious work that is to follow. It is a breathing-space, as it were, in the course of a hard day's work. I have no quarrel with this conception of music so far as it goes; only, in that case, I would make the breathing spaces more frequent and their character more varied. I see no good reason why between every two periods of other work there should not be a fifteen-minute music period given up to the interpretive study of singing or any other of the necessary and valuable forms of musical activity. If music is a good thing along this line, why not utilize it more, and if we believe music plays a large part in the life of the individual, why not, to some extent at least, prepare the individual for life by as great a variety of musical interest and activity as possible?

We are all agreed that the maximum of efficiency in education is attained from shorter rather than longer periods. I am not at all sure that an hour of continuous choral training is a good thing for the child of school age. I *am* sure that fifteen minutes of hearty wide-awake musical activity would inevitably be a good thing. Of course, I am aware of the difficulty of carrying on such a program with the present arrangements; but I hope no one is so foolish as to contend that the present equipment or curriculum along any line is ideal. The very fact that music in the schools is of recent development is enough reason for accepting the limitation of impermanence with regard to present methods of procedure.

Of course, we are in the experimental stage,—it would be a serious thing if we were not. It would mean that the resources of music are sadly limited, and that we soon arrive at the end of the story; whereas we all know that the most astounding development in the history of music in the United States has taken place within the past five or ten years. The talking machines, the mechanical players, community music, standardization, the accrediting of outside music are terms which mean each of them a world of development and possibilities, yet, as applied to the practical life of the music-teacher in or out of the schools, they are, to all intents and purposes, products of the past five years or a little more. With this wonderful evolution going on about us everywhere, it is to be expected that the teaching of an art so vital and rapidly developing must undergo swift and fundamental changes. Therefore, within the limits of our finances and the possibilities of

making our colleagues on the school board and general faculty see the light, it should be the first duty of every supervisor or teacher of music to adapt as rapidly as possible the music teaching in the schools to the needs of the communities. How this shall be done is entirely too big a subject for discussion at this time. That it should be done,—that it must be done,—is to my mind inevitable. Music has developed too rapidly and too universally to be relegated to an insignificant place in the educational scheme. It must become increasingly important and increasingly efficient. The task immediately ahead of us is to see that, so far as we are concerned, it may develop as normally as we have a right to expect and to hope that music-teachers at least shall not stand in the way of such development.

The education of the mind at the expense of the emotions and of the eye at the expense of the ear has gone on already too long. He only is a truly sane man who is normally developed. We cannot hope to continue our present one-sided methods without bringing about serious modifications in the mental and even the physical make-up of future generations. Unless our education develops the whole range of capabilities, gives all the senses an equal right to function and to open efficiently all the avenues to the brain; unless the spirit (or the heart, if you prefer) may develop equally with the brain, sooner or later, we shall evolve a race of men who will be monsters even although they may be monstrously efficient. From such a fate, I trust the good sense of the American people and of American educators may preserve us.