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SOME MODERN TRENDS IN MUSIC EDUCATION

ONE of the questions we are asked most frequently by our correspondents and visitors is, What will be the effect of the new inventions, like the radio, phonograph, and the player-piano, upon the study of music. The implication is that with these increasing opportunities for *hearing* music there may be less of a desire, or a necessity, to learn to *make* music. As the National Bureau for the Advancement of Music aims to assist in the development of musical interest and activity wherever we can be of service, we are also apparently expected by some at least to serve as an observation post and even to prophesy just what path the future of music in America will take.

The heavy responsibility and doubtful rewards of the prophet we disclaim, but our co-operation with individuals and organizations all over the country who are working along specific musical lines of public interest gives us a vantage point from which to scrutinize at least what is taking place in the here and now.

One of the outstanding tendencies of the times, we are convinced from our experience, is the spread of group instruction in piano playing. The idea is making particular progress in the schools, but it is also being applied in the private studio as a supplement to individual teaching. So many were the inquiries we received on the subject, and so enthusiastic the reports on what was being accomplished in a number of places where teachers specially trained for this work were in charge of the classes, that we made an investigation a year or two ago to ascertain the actual status of the movement and the results demonstrated.

The findings proved even more favorable than we had anticipated. In several hundred towns and cities classes were being conducted in the schools and outside at small cost to the individual, and were not only making a good musical showing but arousing and holding the interest of the children.

Largely as a result of this investigation the Piano Section of the Committee on Industrial Affairs of the Music Supervisors National Conference prepared a "Guide for Conducting Piano Classes in the Schools" which our Bureau published and distributed. The enormous spread of interest in the subject may be judged from the fact that within twelve months after the issue of the "Guide" we had more than 8,000 requests for it. They were chiefly from school superintendents, music supervisors, and officers of women's clubs and music clubs, representing 3,600 different towns, practically the entire country. A special committee of the Music Teachers National Association, including the eminent pianists and teachers, Rudolph Ganz and Harold Bauer, as well as some of the leaders in public school music, has now prepared a booklet reviewing the whole subject from the point of view of the private teachers and indicating the need for their making an investigation of it.

Group piano instruction is already established in the schools of some 500 communities, mostly of larger and medium size. In Chicago alone such classes are now in operation in 275 public schools and have a total enrollment of 10,000 pupils. Probably the number of classes throughout the country will be doubled or even trebled within the next year or two, much depending upon the supply of teachers with special equipment for this work. No one can say as yet how

far-reaching will be the influence of the movement; but if it is true, as now seems demonstrated, that it produces good results musically and at the same time holds the interest of the children and makes the lessons economically possible to all classes, it may well be the means of offering an opportunity for self-expression on a basic instrument to all who should have it, and counteracting the danger of our becoming a nation of passive listeners.

Another movement of far-reaching importance in fostering musicianship among our young people is the growth of bands and orchestras in the schools of the country. It has been estimated by those in the best position to know that there are now between 15,000 and 25,000 school bands and between 25,000 and 40,000 school orchestras. These totals include many groups lacking full, or even adequate instrumentation, particularly in the case of the orchestras, but there is no question as to the value and significance of the work. It means that thousands upon thousands of children and young people throughout the length and breadth of the land are learning to produce music in collaboration with others of their own age, each contributing his share to the beauty of the whole and rendering a noteworthy service to their school and community, while at the same time deriving great educational benefit and a most valuable channel for self-expression.

The development of the school instrumental groups has been given strong impetus by the state and national school band and school orchestra contests, which have been held annually since 1924. These contests are usually conducted by colleges, universities, and teachers' associations, with the co-operation of the Music Supervisors National Conference and our Bureau. Last spring there were 650 bands taking part in the thirty-eight state contests, with a total of some 35,000 players. The fourth annual National contest was held in Denver, Colo.,

and brought together twenty-eight of the finest bands in the country. An indication of the growth of the movement is the fact that in Illinois, which had seven entries the first year, there were no less than ninety-two last spring.

The progress of the instrumental work has brought with it a demand that more should be done also for the vocal side, and particularly for voice culture classes, and personally I am inclined to think this is a field in which there will be considerable activity in the not distant future.

In much of this development the schools have of course been building upon the work of the private music teachers, and there is no desire in any way to undervalue this work. It is simply that when school groups perform they are likely to appear as representatives of their school rather than of a number of outside teachers, although this may tend to obscure from the public the individual training that often lies behind the fine performance of an orchestra. However, the private teacher has his opportunity in the junior music clubs, which have been flourishing in large numbers in nearly all the states, and which must be regarded as one of the finest of the modern trends in music education. These clubs usually supplement the individual lesson and further musicianship in ways that cannot be attempted except with a group. Solo and ensemble contests are being widely conducted by the Junior Department of the National Federation of Music Clubs and are an excellent complement to the school contests for the larger groups.

Parallel with these great advantages in music education, although perhaps less spectacular than most of them, is the remarkable improvement in methods which is now vitalizing the entire music teaching profession. This field has not been behind others in applying the lessons of child psychology and progressive education, and it is evolving some notable techniques of its own, par-

ticularly in group instruction. The teacher who depends on drill and drudgery to get results, in the hope that interest may be inspired later, is almost out of the picture, however capable he may have been as a musician. Good musicianship and good pedagogy both are needed to meet modern requirements, and it is because music teachers are meeting these requirements that there is so much ground for encouragement in the present situation and so much of promise for the future.

C. M. TREMAINE

THE ANTIDOTE TO SNOBBISHNESS

THE growth of musical appreciation in America during the past twenty years and the improvement in musical taste has been nothing less than phenomenal. This gratifying development is largely the result of increasing musical activity in educational institutions from the public schools up to the colleges and universities. Nowhere in the world are audiences more eager to hear or so generous in their remuneration. America has become the El Dorado of musicians from all parts of the globe.

While we may congratulate ourselves on this remarkable progress and be justifiably proud of it, it is at the same time depressing to note that we are lagging behind the rest of the civilized world in both the creative and interpretative fields. This condition is due certainly to no lack of educational opportunities. A detailed discussion of the various factors contributing to this discouraging situation would carry us beyond the limits of this article. But one factor at least should be specifically mentioned and stressed. This factor, to put it bluntly, is snobbishness, which, paradoxically enough, seems to be the especial weakness of democracies: a tendency to run after those things which are remote and exotic or

stamped with foreign approval to the neglect and even discredit of that which is native. This was formerly the case in the field of literature and even more recently in the field of painting, as evidenced by the expatriation of Henry James, Whistler, and Sargent. Fortunately, our authors and painters are no longer enslaved by this imbecile snobbishness. Not so our musicians.

Of course, nothing could be more injurious to music in America than the pushing of mediocre musicians merely because they are American—save one thing: the pushing of mediocre musicians merely because they are foreign. America is suffering from both of these evils—to some extent from the first, incalculably from the second—with the result that American musicians, even those who have achieved the highest recognition abroad, are often relegated to the back-ground or, at best, accepted with patronizing condescension. So long as American musicians are subjected to such humiliating and cramping conditions, a native musician will remain a remote probability.

This evil can only be remedied by the permeating and vivifying rays of culture, the one antidote to snobbishness. And it is just here that the educational institutions can be of the greatest service. Appreciation of the music of other lands is a worthy and valuable achievement, principally as a stepping stone to the achievement of a music of our own. This is the real musical problem which confronts us today, a problem deserving the deepest thought and the most purposeful activity on the part of educational leaders in America.

JOHN POWELL

The National Education Association will build in 1930 a seven-story annex to the present headquarters building in Washington, D. C.