

A PLEA FOR A MORE COMPREHENSIVE MUSICAL EDUCATION

IT IS a normal and vital urge that mankind has to express itself in music. Why do I say vital? Can you do without it? Let us see if you really can. When you are happy what do you do? Whistle or sing! When a public function is celebrated what is the chief requisite? Music. When the occasion is a sad one, what must be its accompaniment? Music. And so in our religious lives music intensifies our devotion; our handmaid raising us to greater heights and ennobling our spirits.

All emotions compel to action but in uncontrolled, unco-ordinated action they may compel into dark and wayward paths just as readily as they may lead to heights. There is no subject which makes a stronger appeal to the emotions nor any which contributes a finer mental strength than music. But the fundamental necessity of music is for it to be made audible. And nothing can be of such importance as the making of music to the individual student. The most potent form of moral insurance is a musical instrument in the hands of every young person. We all realize also that there is no joy comparable to that of doing that which we do well.

We have traveled quite a distance on the road toward a universal musical education in the last few years. Public schools are awakening interest and making children singing children, and at least have made a small beginning in the creation of appreciative listeners. But we have subjected our children to a limitation that would be unthinkable in any other art by making the majority of them study only the piano (at best a makeshift instrument) or the violin. As a result the production of even the simplest works of our great classic composers is not generally possible among students of music or among our great number of musical amateurs. A parallel case would

be that of a dramatic class unable to give any plays because all its members had been trained to play only the rôles of queens and kings. Or an art class limited only to the colors of red and blue.

I do not wish to minimize the importance of the piano, especially as it is the only instrument (aside from the more limited instrument, the organ) which is complete in itself and through which the scores of the masters can be studied. However, its tone does not combine well with other instruments, and for that reason it has been excluded from the orchestra. On the other hand, because of its practicability, it has been most extensively used in ensemble literature. In other words, it is a substitution in white and black for all the instrumental colorings of the orchestra. This great feature is its claim to favor as a practical instrument, but because of its wide scope there is usually not room for more than one performer in the production of concerted works.

In our daily lives true beauty is more surely winning against cheap popularity, and we can find no more glorious uplift than in the concerted works of the masters.

We always name the value of co-operation when we speak of the value of athletics. It is the submission of the individual that makes for victory. Better than athletics is music for this glorified submission. The different banks in an orchestra must assist or contrast each other, nor shall brass overpower woodwind nor percussion overshadow the lilt of the strings, but all together in harmony must submit to the leader, or the great symphony cannot be played.

Where are the banks of woodwind and brass? Where are the violas, cellos, and double basses? All playing the piano! And are we so sure that all our children have the right aptitude for the same instrument? Do we all like the same food? A short time ago the parents of a boy decided to end their struggles to make their son musical or

to give him a musical education. He had taken lessons on the piano for years and seemed to attain nothing. At the same time whenever the opportunity presented itself for him to hear orchestral music he could not be kept away. It was suggested that he give up the piano and start on the cello. Immediately all apathy vanished and he achieved in a few months a development that was amazing. Some of us are born to one expression and some to another, and it should be a happy task to help the student to his rightful heritage.

Walter Damrosch goes further and says that no one is musically proficient until he can play three or four instruments. Every student should have a basic knowledge of the piano. But pianists should study concurrently some orchestral instrument, for then they would not be merely manipulators of the keyboard but have a correct and musicianly feeling for the independent expression of the various instrumental individualities emphasized by all the composers. Violinists should study the alto clef so that they could at any time furnish that rare and very necessary ensemble instrument, the viola. Cellists are rare and are always in demand. Woodwind and brass are indispensable as parts of the whole.

W. F. Webster says: "Things which are not seen are eternal. Where shall music be found? and where is the place of sweet harmony? Everywhere, for man will call for her whenever he strives to achieve a life of rich significance." Emerson brings to our realization that we are a part of all that we have met. Let us give our children a universality of musical education so that theirs may be lives of high ideals and achievement.

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The National Education Association enrolls 200,000 teachers, 3,000 of whom are life members.

WORK AND OBJECTIVES OF THE VIRGINIA MUSIC TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

DURING the past ten years or so, a modest body of Virginia music teachers numbering approximately two hundred from all walks of educational life, calling itself the Virginia Music Teachers State Association, has made an enviable reputation as an organization, and has been responsible for super-constructive educational development, as well as outstanding Virginia history.

One could hardly say that scarcely anything of a social nature enters into the activities of this body, because its members are scattered over every section of the state, and, besides, the organization does not recognize local chapters or clubs as part of the state body excepting individual memberships. However, the association does have a convention every year, when a small percent of the entire membership meets to shake hands and exchange ideas.

What, then, has been the objective of this body? For years, the officers who have unselfishly piloted the destiny of the organization, have had a vision, a vision of more ideal teaching standards, a vision of a more musically educated public, a public which understands more about constructive music education and teaching standards. To gain this end, the association has sold its idea to the Virginia State Board of Education, and is now authorized to give examinations and make recommendations, whereby any private teacher of music may secure a certificate of professional recognition from the State Board, bearing the stamp of the Commonwealth. Besides, it has conducted a survey of the music teaching situation in the public schools of the state, and has been responsible for a survey of music education departments of all important Virginia colleges. The association feels responsible for music-teaching conditions in Virginia, and