AMERICA'S GROWTH IN MUSIC SCHOOLS

European Training No Longer the First Step to Parnassus---The Ideal Course Begins With Earliest Songs of a Child.

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What is an ideal music school? In order to answer this question intelligently it is necessary first to establish the correct point of view, for music means so many different things to different people. To one it is a pleasant noise; to another a pastime; to others again it is a means of self-exploitation, while to some it is religion, an expression of their noblest feelings. In my opinion the point of view to be adopted is not that of any class or individual, but rather that of music itself.

Music as an art is primarily a means of expressing emotions, but it addresses itself not only to the psychic but to the æsthetic and intellectual faculties as well. It must be created—that is, invented, composed—then performed and heard, consequently it requires for its manifestation the composer, the performer and the listener. In this respect it differs from all other arts. The painter, sculptor and architect create their works and they remain in the form in which they leave their hands.

It is generally conceded, however, that only he whose eye has been trained to see can fully appreciate pictorial or plastic art and that only he who in mind and soul is himself poetic can understand and appreciate poetry, so in music even the listener must have learned how to listen to music if he would receive the fullest and most satisfying impression.

It is clear, therefore, that the fundamental requirement for the proper appreciation and conception of music is an ear which knows and recognizes what it hears. The true enjoyment of music does not come from hearing a multitude of musical sounds which crowd upon each other leaving no intelligent impression, but through the ability to recognize its component thoughts in the varied forms in which they find expression. To use a homely parallel: A good dinner may be bolted indiscriminately or enjoyed with appreciation of the skill with which it is prepared. The former method may be called feeding, the latter eating.

The training of the ear must therefore be the foundation of all musical training, of the listener, the performer, the composer. Were this generally recognized people would set about the musical education of their children in quite a different way. The generally accepted method is and has been for many generations to have them taught to play mechanically a certain number of musical selections. People cheat themselves into believing that such performances are real music, although even the so-called "expression" is but a more or less skilful mechanical imitation of the teacher.

Who is to blame? No one in particular and nearly everybody in general. The prevailing ignorance on the part of parents of the existence of a right way and a wrong way, the consequent ease with which incompetent teachers foist themselves upon the public; the cupidity of some commercial institutions which pass themselves off as colleges, conservatories or academies of music, but which are in reality nothing but department stores in which one can buy music lessons in varying quantity and quality—all these are factors contributing to the chaotic conditions which generally obtain in musical education. One solution of this problem lies in the establishment of endowed schools which, in consideration of a low rate of tuition, can enforce the pursuit of prescribed courses of study which cover all those subjects necessary to proper musical training and development.

In Europe the State itself provides such institutions, as, for example, the Paris, Brussels and Vienna conservatories, the Royal High School of Music in Berlin, &c. These not only serve the purpose of educating talented young musicians, but they also set standards to which the private music schools must conform in order to compete successfully with the State institutions.

An ideal music school must have such discipline and control over its students that the work of the prescribed courses will be followed as outlined without question.

It will be seen that this method is the one pursued by our schools and colleges. All education may be divided into parts, the general education by means of which a foundation is laid upon which the study for a specific career may later be based, and the special education which is intended to fit the student for some definite profession or occupation.

An ideal music school must therefore be so organized as to meet these two requirements, viz., it must contain a general course for the fitting of amateurs and for the preparation of professionals, and special courses for the training of professional musicians.

The general course must be so planned as to include everything which will secure a real understanding and appreciation of music together with such thorough practical training as will develop the student as a performer to the highest degree of which he is capable.

To accomplish this the course must include a minimum of four subjects:

1. Ear training.
2. Theory.
3. History of music and general information.
4. The study of an instrument or training of the voice.

In addition, in the case of the singer and the player on stringed instruments, the study of the piano as a secondary instrument is essential; and in the case of the singer diction, Italian and German should also be added.

Ear training includes the recognition of intervals and chords, sight singing and dictation; that is, the ability to write down melodies and harmonies from hearing. Few people appreciate the immense, yes, the fundamental value of this training. In order to make its value clear I will draw a parallel:

Let a child who does not understand Russian learn a poem in that language by imitating the Russian governess. The child's natural power of imitation enables it to recite the poem with scarcely a flaw in pronunciation, but it does so absolutely mechanically without the slightest understanding of the contents. Just so do music students learn to play pieces on the piano. They are reciting a piece in a foreign language.

Why is it necessary to study the theory of music? If you would interpret music properly you must know its grammar, syntax and form, and in order to do this it is necessary to study harmony. How would a poem by Tennyson sound if it were read from beginning to end without a stop, without an inflection of the voice, without an understanding of its form or contents? In music we also have metrical divisions corresponding to the verses and stanzas in poetry and cadences corresponding to rhymes.

A knowledge of the history of music, of the nature and development of musical instruments, of the correlation of music to other arts, &c., is desirable just as the study of general history and of literature is considered essential to true culture.

When the foregoing studies go hand in hand with the technical study of an instrument or of the voice there will be no more drudgery, for the mechanical processes will be constantly illuminated, enlivened by the intelligent understanding.

So much for the general courses. The special courses for professionals must of course adapt themselves to the peculiar needs of each branch of the profession. The opera singer must learn stage deportment, dramatic action, &c.; the pianist and violinist must have practice in ensemble playing with orchestra, in chamber music, &c. The composer must study the larger forms, such as scoring for orchestra.

One very important function of the ideal music school has, however, not yet been touched upon, namely, the influence which must be exerted upon the student to develop his taste, his critical judgment and his artistic standards. To this end it is necessary that he should hear much good music well performed. Provision must therefore be made for frequent recitals of chamber music and of instrumental and vocal classics. Besides this, the student should have opportunity to hear the best symphony concerts, operas and classic dramas.

This, in brief, is an outline of the plan of study of an ideal music school. It goes without saying that in order to carry it into effect it must possess a faculty of teachers of the highest ability and a disciplinary organization which will insure the regular and undisturbed work of each student.

I have often been asked by parents for advice concerning the musical education of their children. The parents love music and want their children to love it and to be able to perform. It is often difficult to say whether they have talent or not, but the only way to determine this is to make a beginning. It is at this point where most mistakes are made. The usual method is to engage a piano teacher and in most cases, after the novelty has worn off, the child loses interest.

In my opinion the love of music should be developed in early childhood by singing to the child and having the child sing in unconscious imitation. This trains the ear and voice and awakens his interest in music. His instrumental training should grow out of his vocal musical apprehension, not out of the mechanical combination of black and white keys. A note should stand for a sound in the child's mind, not a piano key.

It is therefore of prime importance that a teacher be secured who knows how to arouse and maintain the child's interest. Whatever slow progress may then be made it will at least be in the right direction. If then there should be any real talent it will show itself and will furnish its own impetus and spur for more serious technical study. If there is no talent of a technical kind at least the child's natural love of music will not have been crushed out by drudgery and he will take such opportunities as may offer later to satisfy his interest.

The talented child presents some serious problems to parents and teachers. In the first place the possession of a musical talent does not necessarily indicate that a musical career should be followed. The child who is a wonder among his immediate environment of family, friends and neighbors would often prove to be but one of a hundred equally gifted when brought into wider competition. It is therefore wiser not to decide too early upon the adoption of music as a profession, except in the case of children so phenomenally gifted as to preclude any other decision.

Should this not be the case, however, the child will have been equipped for life with the power to beautify his leisure hours and give pleasure to his family and friends in a way which no other accomplishment can produce. To him music will always be a blessing, a consolation in trouble, a voice for the expression of his joy, a bond of happiness, an inspiration. What better gift can a parent supply to his child for the voyage of life than such a companion?

But woe to those who mistakenly rely upon the Muse to supply bread. Only those at whose cradle she has stood godmother and who have labored painfully to serve her and be worthy of her and who devote themselves to her because they would rather starve in her service than feast at the table of Lucullus can hope to become true priests at her shrine, and, while material success is often denied even these chosen ones, they have at least the consolation of laboring on a work of love and suffering for a noble cause.

I often hear the phrase, "I don't ever expect to be a public performer, I only want to teach." Only! As if teaching required only a modicum of musical knowledge and ability, when in reality the true teacher of music must possess additional qualities of a high order to those required of the performer. Only a teacher! It is the highest and noblest profession of all when rightly conceived. Free from the egoism of the performing artist, who very often develops into a bundle of conceit, he gives to others of the best that is within him, guiding the faltering steps of those who would climb the Parnassian hill and initiating them into the mysteries of the divine realm in which Apollo sits enthroned.

Such teachers are rare. Thousands profess to teach music who have little or no real qualifications for it. Such people argue in this manner: If I go into business I have to work from 8 A. M. to 6 P. M. for from $7 to $15 a week. I can play the piano a little and I can teach beginners for 50 cents an hour; therefore I can earn $3 a day, or $21 a week, by working only six hours a day; so, why not teach music? The only way in which this condition may be improved is to educate the public to higher standards.

It is often debated whether it is necessary to go to Europe for a musical education. To-day it may be asserted most emphatically that it is not. On the contrary, in most cases the sending of young, immature students to Europe results most disastrously. The embassies of Paris, Berlin and Vienna could tell terrible tales of defrauded, deluded and starving American music students. But even when the student is fortunate enough to avoid all pitfalls and to secure good teachers, he is no better off than if he had studied at one of the good music schools or with first class teachers in America. The nimbus of having studied in Europe has grown very dim in these latter days, while the American artist, regardless of where he studied, finds open doors everywhere.

There has been a great awakening of interest in musical culture in America during recent years and splendid progress has been made. Opera, symphony concerts, choral performances, artists' recitals, in fact every form of music is heard nowadays in every prominent city, and even in the small towns and villages there exist music clubs and societies which do good work in elevating the taste of their communities. It is probable that the small number of good music schools in existence to-day will have doubled or trebled within ten years and that America will be in the front rank among the nations in musical culture, as it now is in commercial undertakings.

The demand for good musical training is therefore increasing in harmony with this general advancement in musical standards, and this demand will tend to increase the supply. Any one who wishes nowadays to study music seriously will have no difficulty in finding a way, provided he makes intelligent inquiry concerning the best schools and teachers. Let him go about it as he would in selecting a physician. Let him ask those who have had experience with him and if this is satisfactory place himself unreservedly in his hands.

The products of the ideal music school should of course show qualities corresponding to the pains and efforts made in developing them. It should produce amateurs who are really musical in the sense in which the German uses the word "musikalisch," i. e., to listen to or to perform music in a musicianly manner, with full understanding of the technical, æsthetic and artistic points involved. Then the schools should produce artists who are not mere virtuosos of the piano key or fiddle, but rather those to whom virtuosity is but a means for the more perfect interpretation of the great art works in music. And, finally, it should produce thoroughly competent teachers, of whom there can never be enough.

For there is a great demand, and there will be a greater, for music in the daily life of our people, in their homes, and it has not been satisfied in the past. They asked for bread and they received stones; they wanted real music which they could feel, with which they could laugh and cry, and they got music box imitations, which at best passed in at one ear and out at the other.

When people begin to realize what these things mean, they will begin to look around for the ideal music school.

SOME FAMOUS TYPES OF AMERICAN SCHOOLS

Individuality of Method Is Found in the Best of Them.

HOW THEY HANDLE BOYS

Characteristics of Leading Preparatory Institutions Outside the City.

In America's best preparatory institutions what we call atmosphere is never lacking. You can tell a boy of such a school, not merely by his mannerisms, by his slang, but by his ways of thought, by his code of manners and morals, by his fresh and youthful but surprisingly broad outlook on the world about him.

Atmosphere is perhaps only possible at a boarding school. The day pupil spends so much of his time at home that he often misses the intimate acquaintance and fellowship of other boys and in the case of a school outside a city a unity of life and a consistency of teaching of every sort is possible that is difficult to get in the day school in a city.

The boy lands with his trunk and bag in a little town remote from any large settlement, goes into the school dormitory, sleeps there and frolics there, eats in a big dining room with his mates, ambles to classes with them, and goes at a somewhat faster gait to out of door sports day after day, for weeks and months at a time. It is entirely a new world to him. If the school is at all of the right sort the life is a perfect and beneficial contrast to his life at home. He makes friends that will last him for life. Undistracted by another world of any kind he gets more or less into his lessons and derives from both the comradeship and the study the maximum of good possible in his case. That is the brief in favor of the boarding school all off by itself and it is a list of advantages hardly to be beaten.

There is a school in upper New England where several hundred boys are enrolled. And they are a splendid lot of youngsters. If you chanced there on a day when they were all marching together to the chapel to attend a regular service or some special affair a little thrill would run through you as you looked at the line of them. Every boy there, you would say to yourself, is a picked one. You would be right. In the admittance of the boys to this school there is no barrier unless it be that of cost. This school is a fairly expensive one. However, it gives the money's worth.

This school has slowly built up a really tremendous reputation for itself. There is nothing fictitious in its claims and there never will be. It started as a small school. It is sectarian in the broadest sense. The boys are required to attend religious services, but not too many of them, and while these purposes are in the method of a particular denomination, the pupils are of all faiths. The school started with a handful of boys and a first class teacher. Its first pupils were got by word of mouth. Later it advertised, but its advertisements were simple and straightforward. Attention was not called to the splendid this or that, to the fine buildings or to the intended possibilities of the institution. Everything was specific and adjectives were at a discount. A boy was not let in until the headmaster knew pretty thoroughly what sort of a boy he was and if the headmaster judged that the lad had the right stuff in him, he was admitted. Nothing else mattered.

The growth of the school was rather slow, but it was, needless to say, thoroughly healthy. Now the 400 or so pupils are all of a kind and of a winning kind indisputably. They are as carefully picked now as when the school began. They are picked because the headmaster sizing them up believes that they will make a success in after life. Their success at the school itself, socially or in their studies, is a secondary matter. By success in after life the attaining of wealth is distinctly the one thing not meant. The result is that the boys of this school enter a college with an immense prestige individually and as a group. By the time a pupil of this school gets to college he is equipped for the college social life, he is in a position to get the most out of that and he is quite as thoroughly in a position to get the most out of his college studies. For him there will be no trouble about making the best clubs; for him there will be no trouble of back entrance conditions to make up. Nor will he find a great gap between the lessons of his last year of school and those of his freshman year at college. There will be nothing undemocratic about him either. He has been a youth with too large a body of boys to be a snob. If there is any quality that will distinguish him from the great mass of youths of his age it is that he will succeed and will with a perfect unconsciousness expect all others to succeed as well as he. He has an equipment for life and a mental attitude toward the approaching struggle in the midst of it that can hardly be excelled.

This school is so different from one further south in New England as to brook no comparison. The more southerly school has a reputation as the most exclusive in America. Young men are entered by telegram upon their arrival in this troubled world. The number of them that get into the school when a suitable age arrives is, of course, considerably diminished, but it is still large. A muster roll of the parents of the boys in this school would read like a catalogue of famous, distinguished and successful men. Among the boys here are no sons of the "plain people." Let not the reader think for an instant of anything snobbish in connection with this. Sons of former pupils have a preference in admission, so the survival of the fittest brings about the peculiar condition just stated above. Boy and master at this school will say very fairly and sincerely:

"There is not the slightest obstacle to the entrance of the son of an artisan at ——. We would welcome him. But it would not be good for the son of the artisan."

They are quite right. The son of the artisan would find himself in the midst of boys of a totally different training from his own, of boys with parents with immensely more money, of boys of completely different views of life from his own, views that would not in the least fit him for the big fight that he must make in the world. There would be no snobbery toward him shown or felt. He would simply be out of his element.

The boys in this school are not picked as are the boys further north. It might be said that their parents are picked, although, as has been shown, this is not deliberately so. As a result the school's graduates, while extraordinarily successful are not all "winners," as are the boys of the first school, in spite of the fact that the second lot of boys start with every initial advantage.

Another big school not a hundred miles from New York has between 400 and 500 boys. The school life at this institution has been made famous by a graduate with a clever pen. It deserves to be, for it is a life of the most joyous sort, of the most healthy sort, morally and intellectually, and it possesses a distinct flavor unlike that of any other territory in America. This school is more democratic than either of the two just mentioned. Neither in respect of parents nor boys is the anxiety to get a "success" predominant. Any boy who has a father who can foot the not unreasonable bills and who himself is of a decent sort without a bad record elsewhere can be entered at this school. The biggest block of its graduates go to a famous American college. The school cannot be called a feeder for this college, however, since it sends almost as many to at least two other universities. The training of the boy at this school is not so exact as at either of the two places just described. There is not as much preciseness about it, it is not as exacting. Its graduates have probably not shown proportionately so great a success in after life. The big claims of this school are its splendid school life and its representativeness, greater than either of the two New England institutions.

In an inland town where the country is rolling there is a school for boys where the number of pupils is limited and where the school life is unique as far as American institutions go by its quality of being one big family. The boys come to tea in the afternoon and the wife of the headmaster usually pours, assisted by the wives of teachers. It is all perfectly informal and high bred. There is a lot of gossip of the really witty sort, and this atmosphere of the family penetrates every phase of the boys' existence at the school. There is not anything at all like it anywhere else in this country at any rate. Let it not for a moment be thought that there is any trace of affectation in the business of the afternoon tea. The school has turned out more first rate athletes in proportion to its size than any other institution in the country. The number of the pupils is restricted and the attendance is pretty well recruited from people closely related to each other by blood or marriage ties or social affiliations. This school is distinctly an expensive one. Its graduates enter college with the prestige of the school back of them and meet with an unusually high average of success. The school prepares the boys more carefully for the work of the freshman year than most of its kind. The boys who finish there are nearly all democratic and thoroughly likeable.

It remains to speak of the two of the biggest and best known preparatory institutions of the country, a choice between which is almost impossible. These schools deserve their fame. There is no restriction as to the parents of a candidate for admission. Money plays no part and most extraordinary and most commendable thing of all, money plays no part after the boy gets in the school.

Perhaps it is because the schools are so large. But in the case of one, at least, it is far more likely that this is so because an absolute tradition has grown up in the school to support a boy working his way through.

Nothing more democratic than the atmosphere of either of these schools can be imagined. A boy who came to one and who was snobbish, even though quite innocently so, would find life unbearable. In at least one school a big percentage, perhaps a quarter of the boys, work their way through. And there are boys of all ages. Many of the pupils are much older than any at other schools of the first rank. The teams of these schools play college teams on a perfect equality as far as physical equipment goes. It may be asked if it were not better to start a younger boy at some other school and then send him to one of these two. But it will hardly be disputed that the boy entering college from one of these two schools is at a big advantage. In the first place, he has been at a miniature college, a place as large, indeed, as a small college, with just as representative a lot of youths. In the second place he enters college with the prestige of the school in his favor and in most cases individual achievement. In the third place he has met and chummed with all kinds of boys, and has already learned something about selecting comrades and friends. He also knows how to make acquaintances. He is not cut off by any narrow or snobbish training from making a success of his college life from the first day.

These are the chief types of boarding schools for boys outside of a city. The parent seeking a preparatory school for his boy cannot go far astray if he adopts one of these types and makes as his choice a school that answers to it pretty much in detail.

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The excellent standard of the Southern private school is shown from the fact that they do not merely secure their pupils from the locality or even from the State in which these schools are located, but they are in a position to attract boys from all over the country. A school in Virginia last season had boys from forty-five States. The mere fact a Southern school can draw its pupils from every State in the Union except three is in itself a proof that the new South has awakened in an educational way as well as industrially.

One reason for the rapid growth and success of the Southern schools is to be found in the healthful climate where they are located. Often one finds them surrounded by pine woods, where the balsam filled air is very invigorating. Other schools are placed on the side of some mountain, 1,000 feet or more above the sea level. Many of the Southern schools have excellent mineral springs in addition to their natural advantages.

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