

THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM

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THERE IS A VACUUM OF LEADERSHIP AND IDEAS IN MUSIC EDUCATION TODAY. Musicologists have not assumed the responsibility they should in filling this void; indeed, many are hardly aware of it. As curators, connoisseurs, and interpreters of the world's music, past and present, they should be in the forefront of efforts in curriculum development and teacher training. Opportunities for the participation of musicologists are greater than ever now that the federal government, foundations, and publishers are sponsoring programs of research and reform. But few have taken the initiative or joined in collaborative projects.

Problems of public school music have aroused more antipathy than interest among us in recent times. It has been almost *déclassé* for a scholar to have anything to do with "music education" and "music educators." There are historical reasons for this attitude. The generation of musicologists working in the Thirties and Forties was led by men who had their early schooling in Europe. They could strike little rapport with this country's unique popular public school system and its leaders. The foundation of the American Musicological Society was in part a declaration of independence from the Music Teachers National Association, whose meetings were the forum for music scholars in earlier days. To be drawn again into perennial discussions of teaching methods and curriculum was the last thing the veterans of these meetings wanted.

Music scholars have perforce had to consolidate the image of their profession. Few of us can spend more than a small fraction of our time on research. If you imagine a heart specialist who dedicates a quarter of his time giving popular lectures on the circulatory system, another quarter teaching principles of medicine to advanced undergraduates who will not become physicians, and divides the rest of his time between teaching medical students, administration, and clinical practice, you have a picture of the degree of commitment a professional music researcher can give to his pursuit. No wonder we guard our identity so jealously.

Yet we must honestly admit that we are principally teachers of music and that most of us would as well have it this way. Because of this major engagement in education, it behooves us to extend our commitment to pre-college schooling. This is not only for the simple reason that our students are products of the lower schools. Pre-college teaching is part of our mission, because it should be based on the most up-to-date and enlightened knowledge and outlook, of which, I hope, we are exponents.

It is well-known that professors of mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology led the movement that put the "new math" and the new science

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courses into a large number of schools. Their intervention was necessary because a gap had opened between the traditional classroom subject matter and methodology and the content, methods, and organization of modern mathematics and science. The object in the recent reform has been to teach children to think, experiment, and operate in a way as close as possible to that of the advanced researcher. For this purpose materials are put before the student that exercise his ability to isolate and solve problems and arrive at concepts and understanding. It has taken scientists who have themselves pushed knowledge to the frontiers to develop the material and guide its use.

Such a movement to revise the content of music education too has begun, but it has gathered only little momentum. This is partly because those who are at the head of various musical disciplines have not assumed leadership. Instead of the initiative being taken by composers, musicologists, conductors, performers, and vocal and instrumental teachers, innovation has been left mainly to educational administrators and professors of pedagogy. In the vogue for innovation that has struck the education profession, the music field is in danger of being captured by media specialists—peddlers of audio-visual equipment and know-how, computer and machine learning experts, and the new wave of methodologists who see in technology the salvation of the bankrupt curriculum inherited from the previous generation. Little is being done about the content of the curriculum, which, if truly brought up to date, would necessitate a revolution in method equal to that experienced in other fields.¹

Although in the field at large and in the nation as a whole musicologists have not been very active in this movement, there are a few islands of effort that hold much promise. The Juilliard Repertory Project, under a contract with the U.S. Office of Education, is now in its third year. Its present phase, covering kindergarten to the sixth grade, will soon be terminated. A large repertory of Western music from the Middle Ages to the present and folk and art music from all areas of the world has been edited mainly by or under the direction of musicologists. The repertory is made up largely of music not presently in circulation in educational circles and is being tested in public schools under the direction of several educational consultants. So far the reception by both teachers and students has been enthusiastic. Unfortunately, this kind of testing program tends to perpetuate present practices by giving high marks to pieces that fit into the conventional format and downgrading those that do not. For example, baroque chamber music with keyboard continuo can scarcely find a place in today's schools; yet it may be just what is needed to draw the ubiquitous piano student into ensembles without compelling him to shift to a string or wind instrument. Unison violin music also finds little favor, because the typical situation is a mixed string class; but may not such mixed classes be a mistake in the first place?

Material for a course in music literature at the high school level is being written at Yale University, also under a contract with the U.S. Office of

¹An excellent prognosis of what lies ahead is Charles Leonhard, "The Next Ten Years in Music Education," Council for Research in Music Education, *Bulletin* No. 7 (Spring 1966), pp. 13–23. For a good summary of the organization, sources of support, and current activities in music education research, see Robert A. Choate, "Research in Music Education," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 13: 67–86.

Education. Teaching guides, study material, and various auditory and visual aids all aim at providing the student an opportunity to learn through a process of discovery the fundamentals of musical structure and style. He does this while becoming thoroughly familiar with a small number of masterpieces that cover the most important categories and periods of music. The personnel includes several musicologists, as well as a high school music teacher-conductor-administrator, a theorist, and a composer.²

Both of these projects responded directly to recommendations made by the Seminar on Music Education held at Yale University in June, 1963. Six musicologists were among the thirty-one participants: Allen P. Britton, Noah Greenberg, Mantle Hood, Irving Lowens, William J. Mitchell, and myself. In addition, there were composers, critics, music teachers, music educators, conductors, and professional musicians.³ Most of the recommendations of this conference remain today invitations to individual and collective initiative. I shall cite a few that strike me as particularly relevant to musicology.

Most junior high schools offer a course in "general music" to all students. With the present emphasis on languages, sciences, and mathematics, and probably new pressures for strengthening of social science at this level, this course may well disappear unless it is made both more substantial and palatable than it is now. The course has been in many school systems the last opportunity to reach the student otherwise disengaged musically. The organization of several alternate courses that are appealing and rich in content by independent groups of researchers could well generate new strength in junior high school music. At the Yale conference I suggested a course in the "Music of the Peoples of the World."⁴ I still believe this would be a very desirable program at this level, though certainly only one of several possible solutions.

For the elementary grades there is urgently needed a graded series of listening experiences coordinated with exercises in reading, singing, improvising, and playing. It must be carefully thought out to develop basic skills and concepts about musical structure, style, and function. Such a curriculum remains, so far as I know, an unfulfilled desideratum. Here again there are many paths possible. Any good solution would require the participation of persons who are accustomed to questioning traditional theoretical concepts and have a broad world view of music and a long historical perspective.

Another area that requires scholarly competence is that of musical films. Teaching films and television series showing present-day musical cultures or

²For more detailed descriptions, see below in Reports on Projects in Music Education.

³The report of the conference was first published in a small multilith edition in the fall of 1963 and the following year was printed in a revised and abridged edition as *Music in Our Schools, A Search for Improvement*, Report of the Yale Seminar on Music Education, prepared by Claude V. Palisca. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, *Bulletin* No. 28, OE-33033 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964). The document, No. FS 5.233:33033, is for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402. Price 30 cents.

⁴*Music in Our Schools*, pp. 19-20, contains my proposed outline.

reconstructions of historical contexts of music making and musical instruments are practically an untapped resource for music teaching.

Investigations such as these require large sums of money that individuals or university music departments do not have at their disposal. Because of the pattern established by foundations and government agencies in granting support, there can, unfortunately, be no national plan or rational division of effort. Projects must be proposed and funds requested independently by a university or other institution, a group of them, or an organization such as a professional society. Ideas for projects must start with individuals like ourselves, who persuade administrations and with their help find collaborators. Together they must then propose a plan to a fund-giving agency such as the U.S. Office of Education. The road from an idea to a contract is a long and rough one, and few projects survive it. If the need is a real one, the research carefully designed, the personnel truly professional and suited to the work, and the economic efficiency high, there is usually a good chance of support.

One of the most frequent lacks I have observed in proposals, both among those approved and not, is scholarly competence. What assurance is there, we must always ask, that the information, concepts, and interpretations that the project develops pass the test of validity that we as a profession insist upon in music research? It is now routine in educational research to insist upon "psychometric" evidence of the validity of an educational program or tool. No one will deny that this is an essential step. But many of the so-called "instruments"—usually short-answer tests or questionnaires of some kind—that measure the success of educational experiments are themselves so dubious in their reliability that both positive and negative results must be regarded with extreme suspicion. Yet the kind of evaluation that would put the content of a curriculum to the test of historical and analytical truth and relevance in terms of the contemporary state of the musical disciplines is rarely contemplated. The musicologist is greatly needed to counterbalance the psychologist, and the two must find a meeting ground in the enormous and challenging total task.

Unfortunately, the help of theorists or musicologists is rarely sought. If the success of various commercial publishing enterprises in music that have skirted scholarly help is taken as a measure, we as a group shall probably find some if not most of the results of many current projects neither acceptable nor much of an improvement over existing materials. It is therefore urgent that musicologists participate fully in the search for new content and methods. On the other hand, where scholars have intervened, the experience has been that they cannot be left too much to their own devices. Years of college teaching tend to obliterate the realities of the heterogeneous class population, the short attention-span, and resistance to unrelieved expository prose of the pre-college class. The scholar tends also to assume powers of abstraction not even possessed by college students and to shun the many technological aids that could make abstractions concrete. An experienced school teacher, preferably one with a ready classroom to test ideas, needs to be close at hand. The educational theorist is also essential, for, though progress in learning about learning is slow, some advances have been made.

Research and development eventually yield fruits that need to be tested and propagated in classrooms. The Yale curriculum project mentioned above

includes in its three-year span a year of testing in Connecticut schools, followed by rewriting and in 1967 a summer institute for teachers from various parts of the country. These teachers will not only be introduced to the material so that they may test it in their schools but will spend an even larger proportion of their time in independent analytical and historical studies under regular Yale faculty members. This is to strengthen their resources for learning, research, and self-criticism.

Aside from such rather special uses, the teacher institute has proved itself a powerful instrument for educational reform in its own right. Hundreds of them in a wide range of fields are held every summer. In its report of 1962, the Committee on Music in Secondary Education of the American Musicological Society recommended that the most practical and effective contribution that members of the Society could make to secondary music education was to organize institutes where "active teachers and administrators of secondary school music may study the literature, history and theory of music intensively under specialists in these fields. . . ."⁵ At that time no federal legislation had yet enabled the government to support institutes in music, although a large number had been so financed in mathematics, physics, biology, and foreign languages. The Arts and Humanities Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-209), however, provided for the extension of support to institutes in the humanities, though the amount of money available so far has been small.

The readers of this journal represent some of the most neglected areas in the training of music teachers. The AMS committee report stated:

The training of secondary school music teachers at present aims at producing choral, band, and orchestral leaders. The theory, history, and literature of music form only a small part of most undergraduate programs in music education and often this is barely augmented in graduate programs. These fields would therefore seem logical areas for intensive summer-institute study.

By emphasizing theory, history, and literature of music, the institutes would not only raise the musical competence, sensitivity, understanding, and taste of leaders of instrumental and vocal ensembles, but they would encourage an aspect of secondary school music that has been comparatively neglected in America. This is the offering of elective courses in elementary music theory and harmony, music history, and literature.

One of the most promising developments in the music education picture is the cooperation of various arts organizations achieved by the National Council of the Arts in Education. Incorporated in 1958, it has completed the first phase of its existence, that of organization and consolidation. It is now a truly representative group that can speak for all the arts—theater, dance, the visual arts, architecture, and music. The principal associations in the scholarly aspects of the arts are among the sixteen member organizations: the College Art Association, the American Musicological Society, and the Society for Ethnomusicology. Since 1962 it has sponsored late-summer conferences at which about eighty delegates sent by member organizations have met to discuss such topics as the status of the arts and artists in education (Lake Erie College, Ohio,

⁵Report of the Committee on Music in Secondary Education, August 28, 1962. Copies of this may be had by writing to me, Stoekel Hall, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

1962), the arts and the American community (Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, 1963), "Encouraging and Supporting Creative Youth" (Oberlin College, Ohio, 1964), and "The Interaction of Art and Science" (Moore College of Art, Philadelphia, 1965).⁶

Planning for the 1966 conference at the Hopkins Center of Dartmouth College was based on the recognition that a consensus of opinion had crystallized within the Council and that it was time to communicate more forcefully than before to the world outside the arts. A sizeable group of superintendents and principals from the New England area was invited to join in intensive discussions on how to bring greater opportunities for significant exposure and learning in the arts to school children and youths.

NCAIE has won the recognition of influential people in government and education. Among the regular observers at the annual conferences have been Roger Stevens, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts of the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities, Kathryn Bloom, Director of the Arts and Humanities Program of the Office of Education, Harold Arberg, music specialist in the same office, David Stewart of the American Council on Education, and Ralph Burgard, Executive Director of Arts Councils of America. NCAIE deserves the support of the community of music scholars through their organizations as an effective medium for influencing national opinion on arts education and for participating in a continuing dialogue with artists, educators, and scholars on important current issues.

In this day of specialization the search for communication among specialists has to be both deliberate and perpetual. Not only has the distance grown among those teaching at various levels but also within the field of music and indeed within the field of musicology. The one-man department as well as the one-volume-one-author history of music are becoming rarities. The chasm that separates the expert researcher and those who are supposed to diffuse the results of research is already alarming. Unless this split is counteracted by constantly-exercised channels of communication and collaboration, it will grow more intense. The burden of communication is upon the scholars; for collaboration the climate is ripe. But are scholars ready to give up their pet research projects long enough to seize the opportunity?

⁶Copies of the *Proceedings* of these conferences are available from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan.