

# What About Today's "New Music"?

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**E**ARLY post-Sputnik effects on curriculum in American schools naturally were less dramatic in the arts than in the sciences, yet the present "Comprehensive Music Program"<sup>1</sup> had its beginning at that time. The ideal curriculum for music education today is based on literature that spreads from the latest in American popular music back through medieval plainsong, and from sounds of the Chinese *sho* to those of the synthesizer. It involves students of all ages in performing, composing, hearing, and analyzing musical sounds. It is active rather than passive, eclectic rather than one-directional, and constantly changing rather than static.

The societal, educational, and technological roots of such a music curriculum are quite apparent. In the time span we are considering, the provincial life, musical and otherwise, has become rare. It is an unusual person now who has not heard ethnic and folk music from every corner of the earth, music from every era and for all performing media. What once was heard only by the elite is now common experience. The record player, radio, and television have been chief educators of the children of this period. The philosophy of music educators therefore em-

braces the point of view that all musics of the world are material for music study, from the ancient Indian *raga* and *tala* to 20th-century composed music, and including a variety of ethnic, folk, jazz, composed, and youth or popular forms.

The youthful guitar players and rock groups that formed a musical phenomenon in this period were the musical counterpart of other youth activists. Today's dynamic involvement and activity in music classes are no doubt partly a result of this phenomenon and the observation of it by children and adults. It opened many eyes to the fact that "doing it themselves," with or without pre-learned skills, could hold the unlimited interest of youngsters.

Dance was a part of every young person's experience. Dance performances, live and on television, reached everyone. New youth dances closely associated with popular music of the era swept the country. It was natural that dance, always closely allied with legitimate musical expression, should come forward to be an important aspect of music education. From kindergarten through high school, many music classes use body movement and dance as a way of realizing—in a sense performing—music.

Among the government-funded Title I

<sup>1</sup> See: Charles Gary and Beth Landis. *The Comprehensive Music Program*. Reprinted from the *AASA Curriculum Handbook for School Executives*, Chapter 9. Washington, D.C.: Music Educators National Conference, 1973.

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and Title III projects, a considerable number dealt with methods of learning music developed in Europe and felt to be successful there. Especially the methods of the composer Zoltan Kodaly in Hungary and of Carl Orff in Germany were explored in several experiments in American school systems. Largely because of these projects, some new dimensions were added to the curriculum—instrumental improvisation, body movement, chant, and use of hand signs in reading notation, among others. Methods of another European, Jaques-Dalcroze, well-known in the United States a generation earlier, now were scrutinized again, and some elements, especially *eurhythmics*, with emphasis on rhythm and body movement, became part of the curriculum in many places.<sup>2</sup>

### Valuable Procedures

The individual teacher carries the main responsibility for putting into practice in the classroom those educational procedures he feels to be most valuable. Added to the diverse natures and modes of learning of individual students are the complexities of plans for school organization and grouping, and dramatic changes in the school community and in society in general. These have required evaluation of every approach to music study and have resulted in a curriculum that is ever-changing and ever-expanding to meet the conditions of a particular time and place and the purposes of students there.

The "Comprehensive Music Program" of a school therefore encourages and develops a wide variety of music behaviors. Students perform music in traditional elementary class groups and in traditional choirs, bands, and orchestras. But they perform also in small ensembles, jazz bands, rock groups, and folk groups. Instruction may include class piano, guitar, dulcimer, banjo, even the Indian sitar. Students listen to music and analyze it. They may learn a musical

principle through a Haydn string quartet or through a pop work such as Chad Stuart's "Pantheistic Study for Guitar and Large Bird."

Students of all ages experiment, improvise, and compose while discovering musical principles. The experiment may be as simple as a rondo invented by children on percussion instruments or as complex as an arrangement or composition by a brass player for his ensemble. Increasingly, learning takes place as individuals and small groups explore musical sound, yet the stimulation and special dimensions of classroom and assembly singing, class discussion, and other large-group activities are retained.

With an immense scope of music to be enjoyed, understood, and often performed, and with the great variety of approaches to its study, the need for unity and developmental possibilities was more prominent than ever. Fragmented music study never can be effective, and a program must have design if there is to be satisfaction and the continuing growth essential in music education. In answer to this problem, the constituent elements of music emerged as basic substance for observation and analysis in musical study.

Sometimes defined in the general terms of *rhythm, melody, harmony, and form*, and sometimes in less generic, more inclusive terms such as *sound sources, pitch, pulse, duration, texture, dynamics, timbre, and organization*, these musical elements are substance common to all music. They are identifiable, comprehensible, and useful in various degrees of investigation. Courses of study in textbooks and guides now generally use these constituent elements as bases for the observation of musical sound.<sup>3</sup> Whether the sound is the Indonesian gamelan, a Beethoven string quartet, drumming tunes from Ruwanda, or the latest American rock—consideration, analysis, and comparison are possible in these terms.

American music educators have one

<sup>2</sup> See: Beth Landis and Polly Carder. *The Eclectic Curriculum in Music Education: Contributions of Dalcroze, Kodaly, and Orff*. Washington, D.C.: Music Educators National Conference, 1972.

<sup>3</sup> See: Elementary Music Study Commission. *The Study of Music in the Elementary School—A Conceptual Approach*. Washington, D.C.: Music Educators National Conference, 1967.

goal that permeates all others—that of making school music a joyous experience. Many educators, including administrators, depend upon the music experience to counteract what a contemporary writer calls the “joylessness of education.” Most teachers feel that musical skills and knowledge of music cannot be well learned or applied except for pleasure. This is not to say that every moment of developing a skill will be enjoyed, but in an overall view of the experiences, enjoyment of musical sound and happiness in expression through music will prevail.

There never has been in all of history

or anywhere else in the world a plan for public school music like that of present-day America. A much fuller curriculum is attempted than has been conceived in other times and places. Instrumental music is taught on a widespread basis. Every child is included in the aspiration of teachers. The fulfillment of such a plan is the enormous and often well-done job of American music educators. Perhaps the development of the “new music” in schools has been gradual and almost imperceptible, but it is with us, nevertheless, giving teachers and students new challenges every day. □

## The Job I'm Going To Do . . .

“The best education in the world is that got by struggling to get a living.”—*Wendell Phillips*

This to me is very true. Some people have just about everything brought to them on a platter. It reflects on their ability to understand some things that happen every day. Oh, most are very intelligent in school. To me that kind of education is only half of what you should know about life.

How can what you learn in books help you to understand another person, or how to handle a simple situation, as telling your children about some of the social hang-ups that they will go through. Things that can't be ignored. They will happen and your children should know about these things.

Experience is the best teacher; I'm not saying I've experienced everything, but I've certainly experienced my share and there is still a lot I've got to go through.

I've done a lot of observing in my life, and every day I still see things that account for the way the world is today.

Most of the people I grew up with didn't make it. I go home now and they are still doing the same old thing . . . their sidewalk act. This hurts to see someone you know all your life doing bad when there's nothing you can do about it. I'm going back home to help those who are coming up because I don't want them

to end up the wrong way. I guess I'm one of the fortunate ones that made it. I really don't know how I did, to tell you the truth.

A lot of people tell me I had a lot of sense, I say I was lucky.

I wasn't very smart in school, or maybe I couldn't express myself the way I really wanted to, because in high school either you do certain things or you just don't get by. I got a few breaks that I'm thankful for.

Drugs struck my community the most. Drugs were and still are so plentiful and so easy to get that you just got to be lucky if you don't get caught up in the “Plague.”

I was mature and sensible enough to stay away from it . . . or maybe just lucky. Playing ball took up a lot of my time so I guess that's what kept me occupied.

The guys I grew up with weren't bad. They were just caught up in that struggle . . . that struggle that they didn't get through.

I'm going to make sure that a few more get through this struggle . . . this job I gave myself . . . this job I owe to myself . . . this job I owe to my community . . . this job I'm going to do . . . this is the reason why I made it, so *someone* could have this job.

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