

# MUSIC FOR ALL CHILDREN

Dorothy Gillett

Music for all children is an appropriately egalitarian ideal for a democratic society although the thought may engender skepticism, exasperation, or unhappy visions of mandated subjects. The skeptics doubt that all children need music. The exasperated feel the curriculum could do without frills. And though elementary teachers are supposed to teach music in all of Hawaii's schools, generally they have been allowed to follow their own dictates in the matter and would probably resent a mandate that made the teaching of music one of their required responsibilities.

"Music for every child; every child for music" was the optimistic slogan advanced in the 1920's by the Music Educators National Conference as an outgrowth of the compelling interest of Americans in mass education.<sup>1</sup> Fifty years later, is the goal in sight? It is not. That is obvious to the casual observer of the educational scene. In Hawaii there are very few music specialists in the elementary schools. Most classroom teachers lack the skills to teach music. In secondary education, bands seem to be thriving; they engage some of the junior and senior high-school population. Some high-school choirs are very active, and there is a miniscule string program struggling for survival. There is a variety of other music courses offered in secondary schools, but all of these courses, including band and chorus, reach only about 29 percent of the secondary students in Hawaii. Those who do not or cannot participate in the performing groups may encounter music in the junior high-school general music class, if they choose to take it.

In times of economic exigency, music is one of the casualties of any budget constraints. It happened in the 1930's and is happening again in the 1970's. With the news media proclaiming the sad state of the reading ability of Hawaii's children, murmurs of "Let's get back to basics" (presumably reading, writing, and arithmetic) could rise to a clamor. Why should we have music for all? What are some of the implications of such a goal?

A brief survey of past motives for music

education may put present objectives in perspective. Major currents in American education have influenced music education. During colonial times, for example, the motive was religious, and music for worship was taught in singing schools. Though their function was to serve religion, the singing schools also served the purpose of educating people musically. Hawaii inherited the singing-school tradition with the advent of the missionaries. The alternation and overlapping of political, national, utilitarian, and egalitarian motives are reflected in school music programs which were used to support whatever motive was dominant. Curricula alternated between being subject-centered and child-centered.

Change in educational objectives, then, is normal. In 1957 the launching of Sputnik hastened the latest revisions of our notions about *what* should be taught and *how* in many subject areas. Special urgency in science was underscored by the Wood's Hole conference in 1959, and Jerome Bruner's 1960 report of that conference reverberated throughout the education community. Comparable conferences on behalf of music education took place at Yale University in 1963 and in Tanglewood in 1967. Music educators, in collaboration with other musicians and representatives of relevant disciplines, made strong recommendations regarding directions for the future in the "Tanglewood Declaration." One of the statements from the Declaration said:

The arts afford a continuity with the aesthetic tradition in man's history. Music and other fine arts, largely nonverbal in nature, reach close to the social, psychological, and physiological roots of man in his search for identity and self-realization.<sup>2</sup>

## Philosophy

The area of aesthetics has engaged philosophical minds as far back as ancient Greece, although the term was not used until the 18th century. In 1967, before the publication of the Tanglewood state-

ment, the case for aesthetic ideas as the proper focus of music education was presented and argued with cogency by Schwadron. He examined major aesthetic theories, defined some of the problems in music education vis-a-vis aesthetic values, and made recommendations.<sup>3</sup> Reimer (1970) selected from among the several aesthetic theories a viewpoint which would provide a basis for the development of a well-reasoned philosophy of music education. He wrote: "First, the nature of art as art must be affirmed. Second, the relation of art to life must be recognized . . . the aesthetic components in a work of art are similar in quality to the quality inherent in all human experience."<sup>4</sup> The objectives for aesthetics and music education were defined when Reimer wrote: "The deepest value of music education is the same as the deepest value of all aesthetic education: the enrichment of the quality of people's lives through enriching their insights into the nature of human feeling."<sup>5</sup> Langer expands this idea:

The tonal structures we call music bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling—forms of growth and attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm or subtle activation and dreamy lapses—not joy and sorrow perhaps, but the poignancy of either and both—the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of everything vitally felt. Such is the pattern, or logical form, of sentience; and the pattern of music is that same form worked out in pure, measured sound and silence. Music is a tonal analogue of emotive life.<sup>6</sup>

### Structure

While some music educators sought answers in aesthetic theory, others, mindful of Bruner's emphasis on the importance of structure, turned their efforts toward defining the structure of music in terms of its concepts. The pronouncement that "any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development"<sup>7</sup> eventually influenced curriculum development in music as it had in other subject areas.

There is general agreement that *rhythm*, *melody*, *harmony*, *form*, and *texture* are basic musical concepts. How *tone color* (timbre) and *dynamics* are classified depends on the point of view of the taxonomist. Some classification schemes include *style* as a basic concept and others do not. William Thomson, the author of the project design for the Hawaii Music Program,<sup>8</sup> adds *tonality* and *tone* to the basic concepts listed above. Pitch, loudness

(dynamics), duration, and timbre are subconcepts of tone. The list of subconcepts in the Thomson taxonomy is open-ended. Those subconcepts subsumed under the concept of *melody*, and their possible grade-level placement are:

- Zone I (Grades K-1) Contour, chant, phrase, cadence, sprechstimme.
- Zone II (Grades 2-3) Period, section, legato, staccato, conjunct, disjunct.
- Zone III (Grades 4-6) Articulation, intervals, diatonic, chromatic, motive, theme, sequence, tonality frame, range, ambitus.
- Zone IV (Grades 7-8) Transposition, setting, arpeggio.
- Zone V (Grades 9-12) Permutation, "basic melody."<sup>9</sup>

There is a comparable list of subconcepts for each of the other six basic concepts. These concepts and subconcepts are to be experienced through listening, performing (singing, playing instruments, moving) and composing. Though the concepts listed above are a small part of a complete taxonomy, it may be sufficient to suggest that musical structure and aesthetic ideas define what we want to teach and why.

### The Learners

The efforts to structure subject matter have also been made on the premise that learning will be facilitated. But what of the learners? They have been and continue to be researched in all phases of their development—physical, intellectual, emotional, and social. Learning theory purports to describe how they learn. Neurophysiologists search, in vain, among neurons, synapses, hind-brain, midbrain, and cortex for some manifestation of learning. Psychologists reach into the cribs of the newborn to determine the nature of responses to a variety of stimuli (including sound) by measuring breathing, leg movements, and crib movements.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the only significant general statement we can make about all children is that they are individual. When we propose to involve all children in music, we must be prepared to accommodate individual differences.

Music teachers are aware of individual differences as they teach people to sing and play instruments. Information about the mechanics of singing and playing instruments—the muscles involved and how they operate—is available. Much is also known about the mechanics of audition. However, we are still a long way from understanding the function of the

brain in the perception, organization, and interpretation of sound during the process of listening, singing, or playing. One thing is certain. We know that it is best to begin at an early age to develop the aural sensitivity necessary for successful and joyful participation in musical endeavors.

There is considerable supportive evidence for providing the very young child with experiences that will stimulate the development of sensory-motor and cognitive abilities. That it is possible to teach young children highly complex skills has been demonstrated by the thousands of children in Japan who have been taught to play the violin at the ages of three, four, and five years. Though teachers have been encouraging movement to songs and recordings for some time, the relationship of the activity to the style of learning has only begun to emerge. Concepts of and about music can be developed if the teacher knows the limitations in a small child's cognition. The young child is imaginative; he explores his world with a freedom probably never to be experienced again. Therefore, some teachers feel the highly structured skill approach to teaching should be eschewed in favor of inventiveness and flexibility.

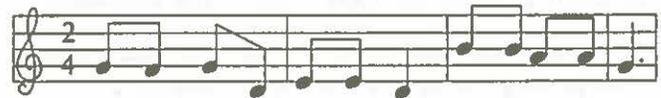
Two composers, Zoltan Kodaly in Hungary and Carol Orff in Germany, became deeply involved in music education in their respective countries. Each composer devised an approach to music-making and music-learning that has strongly influenced music education throughout the world. The Kodaly approach is primarily vocal, includes much physical movement, and has tonal material based on Hungarian folk songs in addition to material written by Kodaly himself.

Carl Orff made use of percussion instruments, cellos, viola da gambas, and recorders. Orff Schulwerk encourages improvisation and movement. Poetry or the instruments may shape the music created. Orff insisted that elementary music is never music alone but a unity with movement, dance, and speech. It is also music made by the participant in simple sequence forms like ostinato and rondo.<sup>11</sup> The child who likes to experiment and invent will find that Orff Schulwerk gives him considerable freedom to do so.

Both Kodaly and Orff agree that melodies based upon the pentatonic scale (see figure 1) are best for early music experiences. In materials adapted from both the Kodaly and Orff methods, the minor third figures prominently in the first singing experiences. Many Hawaiian chants would fit into the initial tonal patterns of these adaptations (figure 2).

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### 1. A Pentatonic Melody



Old Mac-Don-ald had a farm E - I - E - I O.

### 2. Hawaiian Chant



E - ia no Ka - wi - ka ei hei



E Ma - no - no la e - a.

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In recent years much effort has gone into the search for ways to accommodate individual differences in group learning situations. Music instruction has traditionally been either highly individualized, as in private lessons for vocalists or instrumentalists, or group-oriented, as in all general music classes and large performing ensembles. Modern technology has made it possible to combine individual and group modes of instruction in teaching people to play keyboard instruments such as the piano and the organ. For students who intend to follow careers in music, there will probably never be a substitute for the individual lesson, but it would be ideal if all children could have some keyboard instruction.

For individual or small group listening experiences, which can be scheduled simultaneously with other classroom activities, there are phonographs with separate listening stations and earphones. Listening centers with the capability of serving many students on an individual basis should be available in elementary school libraries. Cassettes and film strips on music should be available in each school or through whatever distribution system a school uses. Admittedly, software and hardware are expensive, but long range plans should be made for purchase of equipment.

Music teachers are becoming aware that cultural

and ethnic differences may call for different music and different approaches. Many government programs have been directed toward children considered disadvantaged.<sup>12</sup> In Hawaii perhaps there are representatives from every ethnic group in this class, but a high percentage are Hawaiians and members of the late-arriving immigrant groups including Filipinos, Samoans, and Tongans.

The label "disadvantaged" does not necessarily imply musical poverty. Many of Hawaii's immigrants represent cultures that have lively music and dance traditions. An accepting attitude on the part of the teacher may encourage the disadvantaged to share what they know and, in the process, bridge any communications gap.

While there has been a rebirth of interest in Hawaiiana in the last decade or so, Hawaiians are in some ways farther from their cultural roots than many groups here. The fact that the Hawaiian language barely survives may explain why many Hawaiian children do not know Hawaiian songs. Children who come from households where the hula tradition survives may have background in the hula and its chants. If a parent shares a dance and chant with his child's class, it may increase the child's self confidence and pride.

All students should have experience with contemporary and non-Western musics. These areas may be especially interesting to students seeking new or different tonal experiences. Technology and ethnomusicological research have increased the scope and quantity of recorded materials from non-Western cultures. There are also more publications available, especially for the teacher, and more pages in recently published school song books have been devoted to ethnic musics.

Hearing about how human beings the world over make music, and knowing how they think about, feel about, and relate to their musics, can lead students to examine their biases and help them develop a respect for Man and his diverse ways of making music. This approach can be useful to the teacher who is trying to learn how his or her disadvantaged children relate to music. How do they make music? For whom do they make it? How do they behave when they make it? What do they reject? What do they accept? Why? These questions suggest the necessity for close observation of the natural musical behaviors of these children.

Contemporary composers have forced us to think about redefining music. To most people music implies structures in the tonalities of the tempered

scale. Contemporary composers have composed music using sounds that once were considered non-musical, such as glides, yells, laughs, squeals, and sirens. Musical learning can occur as children experiment with timbres, rhythms and pitches. Students can compose, write their own scores using notation of their invention, and perform their pieces. They can explore new ways of playing conventional instruments, though music educators sometimes shudder at the thought of students experimenting with thumb tacks in piano hammers and paper clips on piano strings in "prepared piano" pieces. With a synthesizer the options for manipulating sound increase exponentially. Teachers might consider taking children to see a synthesizer if there is one in the community. Probably no elementary school is without a tape recorder (reel to reel), so children can experiment with tape loops. Objects with interesting sounds can be found everywhere.

Music for all children will include the children with special problems and needs. The blind are often highly responsive to music since their sense of hearing is highly developed. They can become very skillful solo performers. There are special problems for them as performers in groups: they cannot see a conductor's beat, much less get cues for critical entries. However, with special planning on the part of the teacher and help from their friends, they can sing in choruses and play in instrumental ensembles.

Children who have impaired hearing can feel vibrations and respond to certain pitches, especially low ones. They can feel rhythm by touching instruments; they can learn to speak through feeling rhythm patterns.

The teacher who works with the orthopedically handicapped needs to survey the possibilities for movement. Hands that are free can play instruments or tap wheel chairs with various kinds of beaters. Ways can be found to suspend instruments so that children with only one hand free can use it for hitting. Children with deformed hands sometimes are able to hold and play instruments or they may participate in singing groups.

Mentally retarded educable children might find Orff Schulwerk rewarding. Because short songs with limited range and repeated phrases are the ones these children handle best, early Orff materials should be suitable. Some mentally retarded children have learned to play band and orchestra instruments. Like all children, the mentally retarded need the savor of success. They also need



a great deal of repetition and much positive reinforcement.<sup>13</sup>

A number of schemata can be devised for categorizing children and their differences. Since we are interested in the morphology of feeling as symbolized in music, what Richard M. Jones has to say about types of students is pertinent. He suggests that there are "those who are predisposed to lead with their thoughts, those who are predisposed to lead with their feelings, and those who are predisposed to lead with their fantasies."<sup>14</sup>

Music affords children opportunities for feeling, imagining, and fantasizing. Many fantasies will have nothing to do with the structure of the music which inspired them, but they may serve the knowledgeable and resourceful teacher in other ways. Other fantasies may be rooted in musical ideas which can be identified and eventually integrated with the child's store of musical symbols. The child who leads with his thoughts may need to get in touch with his feelings. It might be productive for him to dream a little. If our aesthetic theory has any validity, the child who leads with his feelings should find music particularly suited to his way of viewing reality.

Having had continuous exposure to a comprehensive music program at the elementary level, the child should be able to make some choices regarding music in junior and senior high school. Each child should continue to explore the arts and





his relation to feeling through the next stages of his emotional intellectual maturation. Rather than a certain set of required courses, there should be options within the requirement.

As far as music is concerned, courses must be available for those who do not want to join the usual large ensembles. These might include classical or folk guitar, ethnic ensembles, recorder consorts, and classes in jazz, electronic music, theory, composition, and music literature. This does not mean that all these courses must be available in any one school. Each school must decide what can

be offered and what might attract the student population.

#### **The Teacher**

As was mentioned earlier, throughout most of its history in American education, music has served to implement, enhance, and accomplish the objectives of general education. In the schools, the uses of music in society have been stressed. Because specialized performance groups have been a part of the secondary-school program, there have always been specialists there. At the elementary

level, staffing patterns have been so varied that it is difficult to generalize. Some areas in the country have specialists, but more often than not music teaching in the elementary school has been the responsibility of classroom teachers. Now that music education objectives are focused on aesthetics and musical structure, specialists are necessary. Unfortunately, in many school systems, economic problems have contravened either to eliminate specialists or to frustrate any plans to hire them. Until the day arrives that a generation has gone through the kind of comprehensive music program being recommended by music educators, we must function with a variety of patterns and accommodate wide differences in individual backgrounds, interests and attitudes.

A student is fortunate if he has had a classroom teacher whose interests and aptitudes included music. There are such teachers in the profession. A musically competent classroom teacher has an advantage that is denied the specialist who comes in once or twice a week. First, he or she is the teacher of prime importance and authority, and his or her attention to music can invest it with importance. Second, the classroom teacher spends more time with the children and can observe any clues or cues which suggest possible meaningful and vital encounters with music.

It is possible for general elementary teachers to teach musical concepts at the simplest level given the requisite interest and training. This does not mean that they can only teach in the lower grades. Despite the uneven and small exposure many children have had to music concepts, there are masses of students at every grade level who must begin at the simplest conceptual levels. At the very least, the classroom teacher should know what should be going on in the music program. Conversely, it would be ideal for the music teacher to know what is going on in the classroom.

### Conclusion

No one can yet predict how any child will develop, what his potentials are, and what forces will shape his life. In his formative years, he should have every opportunity to explore and discover the world without and the world within. The apprehension and perception of musical sound depend on the ability of the ear-brain to discriminate between tones and to transmit rhythmic information to the rest of the body. These are learned behaviors and they must be learned early in life.

There is no denying the importance of the elementary school in the nurturing of cognitive,

affective, and psychomotor behaviors. The three domains are integral to music learning, and require the ministrations of competent teachers.

Since the majority of children are in public elementary schools, the most pressing need is for the establishment of good general music programs in those schools. This certainly implies the provision of personnel to implement such programs. The optimum efforts of classroom teachers and specialists will give the children many opportunities for "making a joyful noise," for listening to the unsung song, and for beating that "different drum" so that the learners may one day realize that their lives are indeed enriched because they hear, they feel, they enjoy, and they know why.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>John W. Molnar, "Changing Aspects of American Culture as Reflected in the MENC," *Journal of Research in Music Education*, Vol. VII, No. 2, Fall 1959, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup>Robert A. Choate, ed., *Documentary Report of the Tanglewood Symposium* (Washington D.C.: Music Educators National Conference, 1968), p. 139.

<sup>3</sup>Abraham Schwadron, *Aesthetics: Dimensions for Music Education* (Washington D.C.: Music Educators National Conference, 1967).

<sup>4</sup>Bennett Reimer, *A Philosophy of Music Education* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), pp. 24-25.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>6</sup>Suzanne Langer, *Feeling and Form* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 27.

<sup>7</sup>Jerome S. Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 33.

<sup>8</sup>A K-12 comprehensive musicianship program developed by the Curriculum and Research Development Group of the College of Education, University of Hawaii, Honolulu.

<sup>9</sup>William Thomson, *The Hawaii Music Curriculum Project: The Project Design*, rev. ed (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1969), p. 12.

<sup>10</sup>Lewis P. Lipsitt, "The Concepts of Development and Learning in Child Behavior," *Brain Function*, Vol. IV, ed. by Donald B. Lindsley and Arthur A. Lumsdaine (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

<sup>11</sup>Carl Orff, "Orff Schulwerk: Past and Future," tr. by Margaret Murray, in *Orff-Schulwerk Informationen*, N. 4 (Orff-Institut an der Akademie Mozarteum, Salzburg: Herbst, 1967), p. 4.

<sup>12</sup>Robert E. Nye and Vernice T. Nye, *Music in the Elementary School* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 599.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, Chap. 16.

<sup>14</sup>Richard M. Jones, *Fantasy and Feeling in Education* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 197.

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