

The
Fifth of this Series
of Articles



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MUSICAL APPRECIATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF EURYTHMICS IN EARLY INSTRUCTION

By RENEE SATCHWELL, L.R.A.M.

The Pianist

A TEACHER who can play the children's favourite songs "by ear," who can improvise when at a loss for music appropriate to the stage reached, say in note stepping, chords, and rhythmic phrases, who can memorise marches, runs and dances and produce them as soon as the occasion demands a change, is, of course, invaluable from the children's as well as from every other point of view. She can keep a strict watch on her class, without having to worry about her fingers, which find their way with ease upon the keyboard. A teacher who cannot play and watch the class at the same time, should enlist the help of an assistant to do one or the other for her. It is not necessary, however, to be very accomplished, so long as the right music is selected. Whatever else the pianist may or may not be, she must be adaptable, and an adapter also, for she must be prepared to sacrifice the wishes of the composer in playing his pieces, to the exigencies of the particular lesson to be learnt. Remember that exaggeration is always necessary in the first stages of a subject with little ones. Music at first must very obviously say what the children are meant to hear it say. Later on, when they are expert listeners, the composer's feelings about his composition must, naturally, be respected, especially in music that is for interpretation. Here the gramophone, or the pianola discreetly played, can supply music that the pianist's hands find impossible to produce. So long as the teacher can play the simple music for the more purely technical part of the lesson, she need not consider herself incapable of playing for a class, if provided with appropriate records for the "music-making machine." The gramophone is very useful because instruments other than the household piano can be heard, although it is too early at this stage to point out the difference in tone, or analyse the music from the point of view of instruments used.

A GREAT DEAL OF THE SUCCESS IN A "RHYTHM" CLASS DEPENDS ON THE CHOICE AND PLAYING OF MUSIC. SUGGESTIONS FOR SUITABLE MUSIC ARE GIVEN AT THE END OF THIS ARTICLE

Faults of Amateur Teachers

(1) Failure to play in strict time and emphasise beats sufficiently. The music must be played in such a way that it moves the limbs and sways the bodies of average pupils in whom the time-sense is normally strong, without their making a conscious effort to keep time.

(2) Not allowing the children sufficient resting time between items of the lesson. Concentration is very tiring, and as soon as they show a slackening of interest after they have been attending well, or if they show the other symptoms of fatigue, undue excitement, the class must be given the opportunity to rest—"Go to sleep" is the order, each child lying flat on his back with eyes shut. It is a good plan to tell the children to "leave their arms and legs loose,"

and to test the limbs of each child as he lies on the floor, to see if they are relaxed. It is very important for muscular control, in other things besides music, to be able to relax muscles at will.

When children are listening to music they should be allowed to sit, not stand.

(3) Not playing music, especially that intended for interpretation or analysis often enough, before the children move to it. When they are listening only, their eyes should be shut to prevent attention straying to visible objects.

(4) Not insisting on perfect silence whenever music is being performed. Noise interferes with music, it should always be emphasised, and even when the children are dancing their feet must make as little sound as possible, unless they are showing loud music. Music needs to be sur-

rounded by silence in the same way that a portrait needs a contrasting background to throw it forward.

When to Help

SYMPATHY and tact are gifts which mark a good teacher. A child must not be made or allowed to feel a dunce beside others of his own age. Some children hate being helped; they prefer to work things out for themselves in their own time, and it is much better to leave them to do so, for then they know their task thoroughly. On the other hand there is nearly always a timid one in the class who dreads being left behind every time, yet cannot learn as quickly as the others. Individual coaching after the lesson often helps him to find self-confidence.

The best way to help generally is by example. In exercises for beating time and note stepping, where there is only one way, that is the right way, of performing the music, the children who have good control of their limbs and listen intelligently may be allowed to look after the movements of those who cannot keep their steps in time. In original dancing and interpretive acting, those who show by their actions that they feel each mood and fancy of the music, may be praised for careful listening, and the others whose movements are more wooden will learn much by sitting and watching sometimes. Vanity, however, should not be encouraged. Good dancing which would be praised in a dancing class where graceful motion is the object set for every pupil, should not be praised as such. The ideal in the classes I am describing must ever be one which puts musical knowledge and feeling first, and it is not always those endowed with physical grace who come nearest to this goal. Moreover, clumsy children are never made less so by being told of their physical disability, which is probably due to imperfect co-ordin-

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