

Music Education in Negro Schools and Colleges

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There is a modern educational trend in the college and high school curriculums of fitting students for life—the life-related program, as some call it. At Fort Valley State College an attempt is being made to construct a curriculum to meet the problem in new and rapidly changing conditions so that it will maintain and increase its usefulness. This study was undertaken for the purpose of making a critical evaluation and comprehensive appraisal of the present status of music education in the Negro rural school, the high school, and the college for furnishing an intelligent background upon which one might build an efficient music curriculum suited to the Negro's present condition and needs for cultural development.

In 1928 the United States Government made a study in order that we may know where we stand in secondary education. The Bureau of the Budget gave \$225,000 to be expended over a three-year period. The study of music was made by Annie E. Pierce, Associate in Music at the University of Iowa. The investigation followed the usual procedure, that is, she used inquiry forms and later made personal visits to the schools. As this was a national survey, no reference was made to Negro schools, and no directed effort made toward the presentation of the deplorable status of music in the Negro schools in the South.

If school and community interests

are to be coordinated and solidified through cooperative undertakings of musical organizations as observed by Miss Pierce is to become a reality, and music is to continue to play an increasingly important part in the life of this country, we will become a musical nation only in the proportion that our individual citizens become musical; so that means some attention must be given to some type of music in every school in the United States.

METHOD OF PROCEDURE

Data concerning the status of music in the schools were collected in the following way:

1. Personal interviews with teachers and principals and visits to rural schools.
2. Discussions in the summer music classes, which were composed mostly of in-service teachers.
3. From questionnaires sent to the high schools.
4. From a study of the latest college catalogues showing the different interpretations in the curricular structure of the music courses.

Reliability of the high school questionnaire data is not dependable; but as the writer was interested in information concerning segregated districts, which could not be obtained without the expenditure of a large sum of money, he is depending on this survey for reliable data of practical import. Data were not available from all

schools upon all issues. Much of the material for the study was gathered from the questionnaires. It is true, too, that few people like to answer questionnaires and only fifty per cent of the return is normal.

In each case the study was made relative to the place of music in the curriculum, the interpretation, and the instructor, as a cultural contribution to the individual and to the community.

THE ATTITUDE CONCERNING MUSIC

One critic says:

The American people desire to listen to a great deal of music, and they are willing to pay large sums of money for the privilege; nevertheless, they seem very well satisfied with much music of an inferior variety. Music which is superficial, flashy, striking, and novel seems to give them as much, or even more, pleasure than great and serious compositions. To enjoy such music takes no particular education.¹

But what is education for? A familiar statement of its purpose is that education exists to *enable people to do better what they would do anyway*. It is said that a great many people prefer "poor" music to "good" music. Is this really true? May not such a preference often be due to having the mental set that good music is "highbrow?" Good music offers possibilities of experience and carries implications which are lacking in poor music. There are excellent reasons why people should prefer good music to poor music, and we do them a kindness when we teach them to prefer it.²

¹ James L. Mursell, *Human Values in Music Education*. New York: Silver, Burdett and Co. 1934, pp. 267-268.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 268-269.

The South has developed a complacent attitude toward the knowledge and attainment in certain fields. Music has especially suffered neglect because of such an attitude. Our educators and administrators have made this mistake for a long time, and consequently, the school curriculum has functioned ineffectively in this field. It was felt that this study might ascertain whether or not music was receiving the proper attention and the right interpretation in the Negro schools.

COLLEGE MUSIC

The curricula of twenty-nine Negro colleges accredited by the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States were studied to note the extent to which the colleges were formulating curricula to assist students in achieving the ability to appreciate, interpret, teach, and create in the beautiful as a requirement prior to the concentration period. Noteworthy about the required courses in the fine arts and music especially, was the extreme variation among institutions in the contents of the courses offered. The study revealed indefiniteness of purpose, lack of agreement as to standards of teaching, a wide variety in nomenclature as well as in content of courses offered. The variability in time allotment and credit given is indicative of the unsettled status of music caused, no doubt, by its brief history and by the rapidity of its rise in the curriculum.

The writer believes that the college's greatest responsibility to the musical life of a community is to develop competent musical leaders and amateurs. The musical amateur is pri-

marily the listener, the audience; his influence in every art cannot be overestimated. The mass of students and citizens cannot delve deeply into the technical mysteries of music. The college must offer the traditional music appreciation courses as a requirement for a part of the general education of

The colleges studied from catalogues are shown in Table I. Some offered degrees, others a major or minor; some emphasized appreciation and the history of music as general culture; and some treated it as extra-curricular.

There was found an average of 3.4

TABLE I

College	Number Instructors in Music	Women	Men
1. Howard University, D. C.	14	10	4
2. Fisk University, Tennessee	8	1	7
3. Virginia State College, Virginia	7	5	2
4. Florida A. and M. College, Florida	5	2	3
5. Hampton Institute, Virginia	4	1	3
6. Tuskegee Institute, Alabama	4	2	2
7. Knoxville College, Tennessee	4	3	1
8. Morehouse College, Georgia	4	2	2
9. Prairie View State College, Texas	4	2	2
10. Spelman College, Georgia	4	2	2
11. Talladega College, Alabama	4	2	2
12. Xavier University, Louisiana	4	3	1
13. Alabama State College, Alabama	4	1	3
14. Agricultural & Technical College, North Carolina	3	1	2
15. Bennett College, North Carolina	3	1	2
16. Dillard University, Louisiana	3	1	2
17. Lincoln University, Pennsylvania	3	2	1
18. Wiley College, Texas	3	1	2
19. Lane College, Tennessee	2	1	1
20. Le Moyne College, Tennessee	2	0	2
21. Livingstone College, North Carolina	2	2	0
22. State A. and M. College, South Carolina	2	1	1
23. Clark University, Georgia	1	0	1
24. Fort Valley State College, Georgia	1	0	1
25. Johnson C. Smith University, North Carolina	1	0	1
26. Morris Brown College, Georgia	1	0	1
27. North Carolina College for Negroes, N. C.	1	1	0
28. Paine College, Georgia	1	0	1
29. Tougaloo College, Mississippi	1	1	0
Total	100	48	52

the individual. In addition to this group of enlightened amateurs, or listeners, who will exercise their influence on composition and performance of music at the higher level, attention must be given to the training of music teachers and to a type of music education that the "lone teacher" will be able to correlate or integrate with the regular work.

instructors per institution. There were one hundred instructors in music in the twenty-nine colleges studied; forty-eight female and fifty-two male. In most cases, the men headed the Department of Music. The writer may mention the fact that there is a slight preference for men teachers, although the differential between numbers is very small.

THE CURRICULA

Since the introduction of music in the schools of Boston in 1836 by Lowell Mason, there has been a general demand for music instruction in America. Mason was the first to preach music for the masses. His method was influenced by Pestalozzi, who sought to instruct children by experience and observation rather than by abstract statements and words. This was really a continuation of Rousseau's "naturalism."

This was an opportunity for the development of talented students as well as the layman. There was a growing desire on the part of certain people, out of love for music, to acquire at least a rudimentary knowledge of it. Thus began the introduction of music appreciation courses and courses in the fundamentals of music; but the educators also realized that some students had to be equipped adequately in order to be able to teach music. The average course in music in the college, in spite of its many disguised names, is nothing but a course in the "fundamentals of music." This must be, because so many students have had no pre-college music. How can music methods be taught when students are not familiar with the elements of music?

To destroy this complacent attitude toward music, the college needs to help counter-balance the defective environmental background of the Negro. When music is administered by competent instructors under favorable conditions, it will exert a definite beneficial effect upon the physical, mental and spiritual growth of the individual.

John Dewey has defined all education as the reconstruction of experience,

which means the opening up to the individual new and even wider avenues for experience and action. Music educators may be, and often are, challenged to say why their subject should be taught at all in the schools, why money and time should be given to it, and why various proposed forward steps should be taken. Every subject taught in our schools today ought to be carefully scrutinized and justification for its place in the school be given. This means that if for no more than strategic purposes, the music teacher ought to be able and willing to give a reason or reasons for his faith.

We shall find that the educational values of music curricula may be summed up under four points:

1. Music education is a progressive reconstruction of experience.
2. Music education has value as discipline.
3. Music education is an enterprise in fuller living.
4. Music education has an essential place in creative democracy.³

And always, if such aims are to be achieved at all, work in the field of music must be inspired by appreciation and directed toward appreciation. If students are to fit themselves as social and educational leaders in communities where some Negroes are still groping in the dark, they must be fitted in the college with a broad cultural education.

The reason most frequently given for offering music, as shown in Table II, was "to develop an appreciation and understanding of music." The next in order of frequency was "to

³ James L. Mursell, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

develop special talent." It was of interest to note that one gave as its reason for offering music "to meet the requirement of the State Department of Education." Only four, or 33.3 per

TABLE II
REASONS FOR OFFERING COURSES
IN MUSIC

Reason	Fre- quency
1. To develop an appreciation and understanding.....	8
2. To develop special talent.....	7
3. To train teachers to be able to teach music.....	3
4. As a cultural benefit.....	3
5. To enrich the lives of students..	2
6. No reasons given.....	4

cent, of the twelve states represented by the college curricula studied, required music for state certification. Four, or 13.7 per cent, of the schools offered the bachelor's degree in music; nine, or 31.0 per cent, offered a major in music; three, or 10.3 per cent, required music for the A.B. degree; and eleven, or 37.8 per cent, required music for majors in elementary and secondary training courses for teachers and supervisors.

The writer would like to present in Table III, which is to follow, the findings of the Director of Music Study of the National Survey of Secondary Education published in 1932.

Table III presents results from the National Survey indicating the purposes of instruction in music as a whole. The frequency of mention in Table III, however, happens to be the objectives or reasons from the elementary grades through the high school. The "objectives" in this case are thought of as being synonymous with the "reasons" given by the writer in Table II: they have the same

meaning in most cases but are classified more specifically in Table III.

In the National Survey it is noticed that in order of frequency the social aim comes first. The social aim, which is urged for music, includes the training of pupils in social contacts and in the tenets of citizenship through participation in musical activities. A good group spirit is the *sine qua non* of successful musical organizations and, therefore, opportunities for the promotion of good fellowship and development of exemplary civic qualities are frequent.⁴

The above statement sums up the reason for offering music as indicated by the first reason in order of frequency, "to develop an appreciation and understanding," as given in Table II of the present Negro college study. This first reason has social value also.

TABLE III
FREQUENCY OF MENTION OF MUSIC OBJECTIVES (REASONS) IN THE NATIONAL SURVEY

Objective	Frequency of Mention
Social.....	56
Singing.....	51
Disciplinary.....	44
Vocational.....	38
Aesthetic.....	36
Leisure.....	31
Physical.....	25
Emotional.....	24
Ethical.....	18
Instrumental.....	9
Creative.....	5
Interest.....	4

Not only is thought given toward the development through education, appreciation, and understanding of the music and the musician in question, but the inculcation of attitudes con-

⁴ Annie E. Pierce, *Instruction in Music and Art*, U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1932, No. 17.

ducive to worthy membership in home, school, community, and nation. It also contributes to an "intelligent international understanding."

TABLE IV
COURSES IN MUSIC OFFERED BY
NEGRO COLLEGES

Course	Fre- quency
<i>Applied</i>	
Piano.....	27
Voice.....	22
Violin.....	17
Organ.....	16
Other Instruments.....	11
<i>Theory</i>	
Harmony.....	16
Sight Singing.....	12
Ear Training.....	8
Counterpoint.....	7
Keyboard Harmony.....	5
Composition.....	5
Harmonic Analysis.....	3
<i>Music Education</i>	
Chorus.....	29
Public School Methods.....	17
Band or Orchestra.....	16
Practical Teaching and Observation	10
Conducting.....	8
Principles of Music Teaching.....	4
Church Music (Hymnology).....	1
<i>General Courses in Music</i>	
Appreciation of Music.....	20
History of Music.....	10
General Introduction to Music.....	7
Fundamentals of Music.....	6
The Negro in Music.....	1

Table IV lists the courses offered by the Negro colleges studied, and the frequency with which such courses are given. It will be observed that little uniformity in the title given courses was noted by the writer. Many combined music appreciation and music history. Seldom were they found alone; however, when given as a separate course, it is presented chronologically and infrequently based on any textbooks. From the college cata-

logues, duplication in subject matter was evident.

Moreover, the semester requirement for a major in music ranged from twenty-four to thirty semester hours. Most of the schools offered applied music in voice, piano or some other instrument, and only one offered a course in Negro music. Only one school of the twenty-nine offered courses in hymnology; yet four of them had theological departments.

THE FACULTIES

Greater demands are made on the music teacher than on any other teacher. He has no regular hours, and his services are always desired. His success depends upon his earnest desire to spread beauty; and, above all, he must possess a musicianship which shall be of the mind and the heart rather than of the fingers and the larynx. The leadership of the music teacher should express itself in the nuclei of the school; if its educative values are to be fully achieved, interest should be in its many demands, its wide social expression and varied social contacts.

A great teacher once wrote, "The teacher is the life of the school," and certainly without a good teacher in music, it will be impossible for our art to function in a vital way as an enricher of life. Today there is a pressing need for musically inspired teachers to meet the demands of this new educational scheme. They must be sensitive musicians; they must have genuinely experienced the moods of exaltation that music brings to its real devotees; and they must be inspired by their aesthetic experiences so that their enthusiasm will fire their pupils in turn

to desire to have similar "high moments" of their own. Educators agree that effectiveness of teaching is dependent upon efficiency of training. Music teachers, it seems, are the only persons employed with regard to their artistic attainments and successful ex-

employed because of their ability to play concert numbers brilliantly than because of their singing ability. There are many persons who think that one who is able to sing or play well is also equipped to teach music; and it is quite true, especially in the high

TABLE V
DEGREES HELD BY INSTRUCTORS OF MUSIC IN NEGRO SCHOOLS*

Number of Schools	Mus. Doc. or Ph.D.	Mus. M. or M.A.	Mus. B.	A.B. or B.S.	Special Training	European Study
1			1			
2	1		2	2		
3	1		2			1
4		1				
5		1	1	2		1
6		1	1	3		
7			1			
8		2	1	1		
9			1			
10		1	2		1	
11		1		1		
12		1	1			
13		1	1	1		
14			2			
15		1				
16		1	1	2		1
17				1		
18			1			
19		1	2	1		1
20			2			
21		1	1	2		
22		2	3			
23					1	
24		1	1		3	2
25		4	1	2		1
26			1	2		
27			2	2		1
28		6	2			2
29		4	5		5	2
Total..	2	30	38	22	10	12

* The above numbers do not correspond with the colleges in Table I.

perience as teachers, rather than for the degree requirement or their professional rank.

The writer feels that we have many efficient teachers and performers in our Negro colleges who do not hold degrees; but, of course, the degree is one measurement of sound professional training. It is also true that there are more music teachers who are

schools, that the individual who is able to play the piano is the one who usually teaches music.

It seems that exhibitionism is present to some extent in the present objective in many schools. We are inoculated with the virus at a very early age; and it is accumulated in the course of extensive music study. It is for this reason that the writer is not

in favor of competition at music festivals, for it appears that the time is taken to "show off," and to dazzle the eye and ear. Music loses its mission when groups come together to "show off."

Table V, which indicates the degrees held by music teachers, shows that only two, or 2 per cent, hold the doctor's degree; thirty, or 30 per cent, hold the master's degree in music or in arts; few have done any work above the master's degree. It is noted that many have done special work in music, working toward no special degree; and over 50 per cent of those holding the A.B. or B.S. degrees have taken special work in music. Thirty-eight, or 38 per cent, hold the bachelor of music degree. Only twelve, or 12 per cent, have studied abroad. A diversity in the training is noted and, relative to the institutions at which the degrees were earned, and that the majority of the degrees were obtained from the finest schools of music in America. There was found an average of 3.4 instructors per institution.

HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC

It is the responsibility of organized education to make experience in music available for every child. Music holds an important place, and since it is capable of aiding in the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social and physical growth of the child, it must be given consideration by teachers and administrators in order to build a well balanced educational program.

There is much musical knowledge and appreciation which the educated layman ought to have upon completion of twelve years of pre-college study. Much of the more conventional

music is taught, to a certain degree, in the upper grades of high school in the larger cities by attendance at local concerts and the children's symphony concerts. This is true in the larger Northern cities, but the larger Southern cities afford no such advantages. For this reason, the writer feels that some directed effort should be made to start the child on his path of active and passive (intelligent listening) participation very early, the same as we do in literature.

In sending out the questionnaire, an attempt was made to cover as many states as possible.⁵ It was found that of the thirty-two schools studied, all were approved by the Southern Association, except the two from Arkansas. There were 653 teachers in the thirty-two schools studied, with an average of 20.4 teachers to a school, and of 1.1 music teacher to a school. Sixteen required music; and sixteen, or about 50 per cent, offered no music at all. In the senior high school, it appeared that most of the work was elective. In the junior high school, attention was chiefly centered on subject matter.

There were thirty-six full-time music teachers in the schools, and 75 per cent had organized school choirs. Accepted standards for equipment for a department of music as yet have not been universally attained. Twenty-one of the schools, or 65 per cent, had radios, and twenty, or 62.5 per cent, had phonographs. In ten of the communities, it was found that no concerts were given by local people; hence

⁵ The following states were represented: Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Moreover, 53 per cent of the questionnaires were returned.

the school was not only responsible for the musical education of every pupil in the school, but was responsible for making the community music conscious as well. Thirty, or 90.3 per cent, had auditoriums or assembly halls, the largest being in South Carolina, with a seating capacity of 1,700.

Several outstanding Negro artists had been presented by the schools, among whom were Roland Hayes, Etta Moten, Luther King, Marian Anderson and Hazel Harrison. Some schools preferred college groups instead of concert artists, and many had never presented artists nor other groups.

RURAL MUSIC

Much stress has been laid upon the improvement of rural education in general, but considering the strides made in the school curriculum within the last few years, the specialists have done little to improve music or any other cultural subject in the rural schools. Most of the music taught in the grades and rural schools is taught, not by trained music teachers, but by the teacher, whether one-room or multi-teacher schools.

The question naturally arises, "How well prepared is the teacher for assuming this responsibility?" and "How adequately is the teacher trained as compared with standards already established?" These questions often arise but little thought is given to their solution. One thing we cannot say is, "Leave it to the music supervisor," for few Southern states have Negro music supervisors. Very little aid is received from the teacher-training institutions or from the state toward preparing teachers to meet these needs and standards. Certification does not

require music in many states, and the teacher-training institutions require few or no courses in music for majors in elementary and secondary training; yet no rural teacher, especially, seldom escapes the teaching of music.

It is not expected that the grade school music teacher shall be a virtuoso; it is not necessary that she be extensively trained in music—provided she is regularly visited, advised and inspired by a thoroughly trained and inspired supervisor of music. The general objective of music teaching in the grade schools is to cause the original, crude, native interest in rhythm and in tone, which characterizes practically every child when he begins school life, to develop into a genuine love of good music, based on an intelligent appreciation of its moods, its structure, and its notation.⁶

Bashful and underprivileged Negro children need music as a means of self-expression, as an emotional outlet and as an experience when one forgets himself and loses individuality in a mutual affiliation. Children, too, should sing songs—songs which appeal to their young imaginations, and not the old-time spirituals, hymns and other revival "tear-jerkers." The writer suggests that these songs just mentioned should not be used extensively in the lower grades, but rather in the upper grades where they could be sung for preservation, if for no other reason.

It was found in the rural school that several teachers attempted to correlate or integrate music by its association with other subjects. These offerings through contacts with other

⁶ Karl Wilson Gehrkins, *Music in the Schools*, C. C. Birchard Company, 1934, pp. 1-2.

fields of knowledge are recommended by the writer. There has been no attempt generally to meet the demands of the new educational scheme by enlarging aims and offerings. This, however, should not be considered a sweeping statement. The surveyor acquainted himself only with the conditions in Georgia in the study of the rural schools. The study was made by personal visits to rural schools, by classroom discussions, by private conferences with teachers and principals, and by a survey made two years ago.

It was noted in a survey made in the Fort Valley State College Summer School two years ago that out of 400 teachers, mostly rural teachers, only 100 had taken courses in music. Only fifteen had received individual music lessons, and many who had taken courses in their early years, lacked the knowledge of the fundamentals. Even those who had studied piano were confronted with difficulties far beyond their reach of meager musical training. This accounts for the poor singing habits and voices developed by children. Teachers who had attempted to teach young children the scales and sight singing, found that the children formed a dislike for music, due to the teacher's awkward and clumsy method of instruction. Often the teacher, realizing the lack of ability, relied upon the appeal of cheap music for programs and class work or gave up the idea entirely. Consequently, this multitude of faults falls upon the music teacher when the child reaches high school and college.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this investigation should not be regarded as conclusive.

However, after a careful study of music and its status in the new educational scheme of the rural school, the high school, and the college, the following conclusions appear to be justified on the basis of the foregoing data:

1. One way of meeting the problems in music is for the teacher training institution to insert music in the curricular requirements.
2. Methods should be perfected by which teachers in districts with no use of instruments may instruct their own music.
3. There is a need for more musically inspired teachers to meet the demand in this new educational scheme.
4. There must be a closer connection of music in the school and community. These off-campus services in music are an integral part of the work of the school.
5. Both the high school and the college should lead, not only in action, but in the field of thought and the discovery of taste. The school must always be ahead of the constituency which it serves.
6. The "lone teacher" in a school with three hundred students and over cannot successfully carry on a program with all of its implications; if so, he or she is a magician and not a musician.
7. Colleges must continue to offer pre-college music courses until music is recognized and taught in all approved high schools.
8. Lack of funds to provide a competent music instructor and the misinterpretation of music cur-

ricula are two main handicaps that will prevent music from making its significant contribution to the individual.

9. It is too late to start the usual pedagogical routine with their central aims, teaching of music reading in a college which offers a one year curricula of music. There are many things that the student should know in order to develop him as a good listener, and the twelve years of pre-college study should have started him on his long path of musical knowledge.
10. Since music has been relegated to an unimportant status in the curriculum of the Negro school, this investigation shows the need of music supervision and the centralization of aims.
11. Visits to the rural schools disclosed that they had no instruments. It is understood that many are able to buy them, and it stands to reason that chairs, crayon and other necessary equipment would be considered before any type of musical instrument. When questioned, a few stated that they could possibly get enough money to buy a phonograph. It would be well to build a course centered around the use of a phonograph for the rural school, rather than have emphasis placed upon sight singing.

The writer feels that there should be more courses offered in Negro music in our schools. The Negro should throw aside the puerile imitations of the white man and develop his own music idiom. It is possible that a National School of Music in America

could be built upon the folk music of the Negro, as it is now recognized as a distinctive product of America.

The major portion of the duties of a school music teacher will constitute teaching children to sing, and directing choruses, glee clubs, and operettas. The response to be gained from the natural eagerness of the child is enhanced by the ability of the teacher to produce a good singing tone himself; yet, few schools are offering a degree or major in music, or require lessons in voice. Some students have studied piano for eight years but have never had a voice lesson in their lives. Mr. Eric T. Clarke, Director of the Concert Project of the American Association of Schools and Colleges, seems to have hit the point when he states, "The musician, to be worthy of the name, must stand on three legs; that is, he must make musical noises himself, he must teach and learn, he must be able to listen to others."⁷

From the findings of this study, it appears that Fort Valley State Teachers College, and other schools located in such strategic places, can render valuable service in improving music instruction. The writer refers to Fort Valley State College because of the attention now being directed toward building a curriculum that will meet the new educational demands.

The writer wishes to thank all of the schools which answered the questionnaire and all those who cooperated in this study. The writer also solicits correspondence from all music educators and artists who can make constructive recommendations for the improvement of music in the Negro school and college.

⁷ From an address, *The Artistic Tripod*, made at Fisk University, April 15, 1938.