

# Character Development and Social Reconstruction in Music Education at the turn of the Twentieth Century

by

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## Abstract

*Educators of the nineteenth century believed that music influenced the will, and thus the character and conduct of human beings. Music instruction during this time was, therefore, used as a tool for shaping the behavior and ideals of young Americans through songs communicating moral and patriotic messages. In the following years, during the Progressive Era (circa 1890s-1940s), educators came to value music not for the power of its internal qualities, but rather for the benefits that resulted from engaging in real life musical practices. Consequently, elementary and secondary music curricula expanded to include a greater variety of courses and performing organizations, promoted for their ability to teach students to use leisure time in a productive way and work together in a democratic environment. This study utilizes articles from periodicals, papers presented at meetings of the National Education Association (NEA), and other historical data to show music education's role in shaping American society around the turn of the twentieth century. These goals are then discussed in relation to values and practices found in contemporary music education.*

## Introduction

Many of the theories held by the ancient Greeks regarding music's power to shape both the individual and society as a whole were adopted by American educators of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Aristotle believed that music influenced the will, and thus the character and conduct of human beings, through what he deemed the *doctrine of imitation*. This principle stated that musical sounds directly emulated or represented specific emotions such as gentleness,

anger, courage, temperance, and their opposites. When one listened to music, his character was shaped by the passions imitated by the sounds.

Students chosen for various positions in Greek society were, therefore, exposed to different music based on the role they would fulfill—a bold warrior, wise statesman, or loyal citizen. All young Greeks, regardless of future status, were forbidden to partake in music considered immoral, as it was believed to have lasting, irreversible effects. For them, learning moral behavior or *right action* was the primary goal of studying music, not through passive listening, but in the course of *right music* making (Grout, 1980; Aristotle, as cited by Mark, 1982; Elliott, 1995; Robb, 1943).

Philosophers of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries held similar beliefs, conceiving the sounds of instrumental music as a physical stimulant, penetrating directly through the ears to the soul to induce pleasure. Closely tied to this idea were the notions that music could also arouse sadness, happiness, and other specific emotions, and that musical sounds contained some sort of subliminal message, moral lesson, or disguised analogy that listeners detected intuitively (Elliott, 1995).

The belief that music can communicate messages and influence behavior has manifested itself in music education throughout history, especially during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when school music's primary function was to help create moral, upright children, who would evolve into productive, loyal citizens (e.g., Cook, 1910; Tourgee, 1870). This rationale, not exclusive to music, was considered the primary duty of a free and public education since the beginning of schooling in America. Thomas Jefferson (1806, as cited by Padover, 1939), for example, acknowledged the integral role of public instruction in preserving the democracy and preparing citizens for self-government saying,

Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves are its only safe depositories. And to render even them safe, their minds must be improved to a certain degree...An amendment to our constitution must here come in aid of the public education. The influence over government must be shared among all people. (p. 87)

The opinion that public schools could serve as a means of improving the nation persisted during the era of progressive education (circa 1890s-1940s) through a movement known as *social reconstruction* or *social meliorism*. Advocates of this position believed the purpose of education was to mold the values of young people in such a way as to promote social justice and correct the problems of society (Kliebard, 2004). This study utilizes articles from periodicals, papers presented at meetings of the National Teachers' Association (NTA)—an organization eventually known as the National Education Association (NEA)—and other historical data to show music education's role in shaping American society around the turn of the twentieth century. These goals are then discussed in relation to values and practices found in contemporary music education.

### *Nineteenth Century*

Johann Pestalozzi (1746-1827) heavily influenced educational practices of the nineteenth century. A Swiss teacher and early pioneer of child-centered instruction, Pestalozzi was committed to using education as a means of elevating the social and economic status of the impoverished peasants in his native country. He believed that teaching the values of morality and citizenship would prepare people to live the best life possible, regardless of their particular social class. The Pestalozzian principles of instruction sought to develop the moral, physical, and mental faculties of the individual. Of these, morality was considered the most significant. In fact,

Pestalozzi viewed morals as more important than religion, believing children could not love God until they developed the right feelings toward humans. He, therefore, included music in the curriculum as a way of developing morals, singing nationalistic songs to inspire patriotism and devotional feelings towards others (Mark & Gary, 2007; Pestalozzi, as cited by Mark, 1982).

Although Pestalozzi never taught music as a subject, others incorporated his instructional principles into music education. Michael Traugott Pfeiffer and Hans Georg Nageli, in 1812, developed the first music method based on the Pestalozzian model. William Channing Woodbridge brought these principles to the United States in 1829 after observing Pfeiffer and Nageli's techniques in Europe. Fundamental aspects of their method included teaching sounds before reading notation, rote singing, and a sequential approach to introducing musical elements. Lowell Mason (1792-1872), considered the founder of American music education, traveled to Switzerland and Germany in 1837 to study Pestalozzian techniques, eventually including them in his own methods (Birge, 1937; Mark and Gary, 2007).

### *Music, Morals, and Character*

People of the 1800s, like the ancient Greeks, believed music embodied and gave form to human passions and emotion. According to Hagar (1885),

Whatever can be said of poetry...can be said with stronger emphasis on behalf of vocal music; because the words sung are the embodiment of sentiment and emotion, and the melody and harmony of the music give another form of expression for the same sentiment and emotion. (p. 372)

Bryant (as cited by "New York City," 1857), furthermore, stated that, "...music transfigures the words, invests them with a sort of supernatural splendor, making them call up deeper emotions and conveying more vivid images" (p. 8). *Right music* was, therefore, to be used as an influencing force in public schools. Mayo (1872) called for "more songs of home, of country, of

simple praise to God and love to man...more actual singing that shall knit together the souls of the scholars into a loving community” (p. 21).

Music textbooks, in response to the need for *right music*, provided songs that reflected the attitudes, ethics, morals, and values of the nineteenth century. Song texts contained in part one of the first volume of *Graded Singers for Primary Schools and Juvenile Classes* by Orlando Blackman and E. E. Whittemore, for example, all centered on themes of joy, kindness and love, nature, religion, school, and the value of work. Titles included “Be Gentle to the Dumb Ones,” a song about the humane treatment of animals, “Heavenly Father,” a prayer asking for help in being kind, and “The Death of Lincoln,” a hero’s eulogy extolling the moral strength of the assassinated president (Haack, 1983).

It was also not uncommon for school songbooks to include European melodies with entirely new texts designed to build character and avoid “vulgarity, coarseness, rudeness,...mere trifling and frivolity” (Mason, as cited by Volk, 1998, p. 28). In McCasky’s *Favorite Songs and Hymns for School and Home*, for example, the German folk song “Du, Du liebst mir im Herzen” (roughly, “You love me in your heart”) became “Soft Music is Stealing.” Blackman (1885) warned against music that did not present an appropriate lesson stating,

How important that the poem, which is to be sung, contain much good, for it cannot have much use if it contain but little....It is manifestly [*sic*] the duty of parents and teachers to see that every poem containing a word that in any way suggests a wrong motive or feeling be either changed or discarded. (p. 403)

### *Goals of Music Instruction*

School music during the 1800s was generally regarded as an effective means of fostering morals and character, especially through the development of students’ 1) ability to participate in religious worship, 2) self discipline, and 3) sense of citizenship.

The preparation of worshipers was a primary goal of school music during the nineteenth century. Prior to the inclusion of music in public education, traveling vocal teachers carried out this function by organizing temporary singing schools in towns throughout the country. These institutions flourished during the 1700s but declined after the revolutionary war, partially due to a new reform movement that embraced European traditions and disdained all things colonial (Britton, 1958). Following the turn of the nineteenth century, singing schools were also affected by the growing sentiment that music should be included in public education (Birge, 1937; Mark & Gary, 2007). As the proliferation of school music programs increased, they were naturally expected to take over the function of teaching students to worship; just as the singing schools had done in the past. According to Colwell (1986),

The initial rationale for including music in the schools arose out of the connection between the objectives the church had for the schools and the function of the schools as preparation for life. Life was one's vocation, one's religion, and one's family. Music's role in one's religious life was direct. Singing and chanting the gospel through congregational and choral music was one means of communicating with God, of enhancing the spiritual experience, and of conveying the scripture to an only partially literate congregation. Thus, there was justification for teaching vocal music in the schools along with the vocational skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. (p. 32)

*Maintaining discipline.*

Music was also considered useful in teaching and maintaining positive student behavior. School discipline in the 1800s was often harsh and punitive, instilling fear as a means of maintaining control (Kliebard, 2004). As the century progressed, however, attitudes toward discipline began to change as educators adopted Pestalozzian ideals that advocated humane ways of influencing children's conduct. In the Pestalozzian spirit, educators were challenged to do more than maintain control; they were also expected to teach children self-discipline in preparation for adult life. According to Dutton (1889),

The discipline of the schools should be such as to put the pupil most surely in command of *himself* [*sic*]. . . . That the careful teaching of right principles of conduct, reenforced [*sic*] and vitalized by the personal power and life of the conscientious teacher, and intensified by well-regulated association with his mates, is invaluable and helpful discipline for this life work. (p. 488)

Teachers, in an effort to relieve the strict conditions of public schools, turned to music rather than force as a means of focusing student attention (e.g., Hagar, 1885; Singer, 1880). In this capacity, music was functional, serving “as a substitute for the rod and for all forcible display of authority” and as a way of keeping students in a “happy, animated mood” (Buchanan, 1875, pp. 40-41). During this time, as in ancient Greece, the effects of music on people were understood to be the result of musical sounds themselves—melody, harmony, and rhythm. According to the Boston School Committee (1837, as cited by Mark & Gary, 2007), “. . .the natural scale of musical sound can only produce good, virtuous, and kindly feelings” (p. 161). In similar fashion, Tomlins (1887) claimed that, “the throbbing pulsations of the singer’s voice would awaken similar vibrations in every listener” (p. 643). Likewise, Turner (1869) stated that, “vocal and instrumental music subdues the passions, softens the heart and makes a readier [*sic*] reception of good advice and kindly words” (p. 25). Unfortunately, efforts to improve the harsh climate of schools were largely unsuccessful, as most remained joyless, dreary places (Kliebard, 2004).

#### *Fostering citizenship.*

Nineteenth century educators, in addition to developing moral individuals, sought to strengthen society by fostering citizenship and preparing young people to build, and if necessary, defend the new republic (Morgan, 1887; Tourgee, 1870). Music education was also affected by these goals, as nationalistic and patriotic anthems became part of early school repertoire. Tourgee, in the first speech advocating music to the NTA, reiterated the value of these songs,

calling for the composition of a national hymn that would seek to unify the diverse nation, and, “should the necessity arise (which may God forbid!),...be utilized for the preservation of the national life” (p. 808).

Patriotic and religious songs were used in similar fashion to acculturate immigrants and Native Americans to the American way of life, and indoctrinate them into the Christian faith. According to Haack and Heller (1983), educators on the Western frontier incorporated into the curriculum songs such as *America, What a Friend We Have in Jesus*, and *Battle Hymn of the Republic* in order to engender the American spirit and transmit religious and moral attitudes and beliefs to these populations. Morgan (1887) also advocated music as a means of bringing together diverse populations, stating that,

The influence of song in breaking down discordant differences is scarcely less than that of language itself...We have all nationalities represented, and in many parts of the country the native and foreign elements are about equally divided. The elements of racial war are here in great abundance. Our peace and prosperity as a nation depend largely upon the complete harmonization of these clashing elements. (pp. 617-618)

Unfortunately in this process, the Non-Western musical traditions of foreign cultures, considered “primitive” (Volk, 1998, p. 28) by nineteenth century educators, were often excluded in favor of “pretty, bland, unexciting” (Britton, 1958, p. 205) repertoire composed in the classical European style for entirely pedagogical purposes.

### *Curricular Status of Music*

Some policy makers of the 1800s did not conceive music as an academic discipline, but rather as an enjoyable activity that benefited the moral nature of the child (e.g., Singer, 1880). According to Hamilton (1879), “Music...with painting come under aesthetics, belong rather to the ornamental, the accomplishments, but should occupy a place and receive that attention commensurate with its importance” (p. 82). The basic reason for music’s status within the school



curriculum came from the notion that music listening did not involve thinking and knowing, but rather the passive reception of sounds capable of their own mystical powers (Elliott, 1995).

Other educators, however, sought to develop theories that placed music in the same academic standing as other subjects (e.g., Hagar, 1885). Tourgee (1870), for example, advocated music not “as an amusement, as a diversion, with no higher end than to enliven the quarterly examinations” (p.799), but as a field of study that called upon the mental faculties of observation, comparison, and expression. This *mental discipline* approach to learning viewed the mind as a muscle that could be strengthened through cognitive exercises designed to improve memory, reasoning, will, and imagination (Kliebard, 2004). When applied to the music curriculum, this psychology resulted in an excessive use of interval drills and sight singing with little attention to the pleasurable aspects of music making (Birge, 1937; Smith, 1904). Nonetheless, by the 1890s, strengthening mental faculties had become part of the rationale for school music, a subject now called upon to fulfill the same Pestalozzian functions as other branches of education—namely, the development of the moral, physical, *and* mental being (Young, 1892).

### *Progressive Era*

The industrial revolution of the mid-1800s led to rapid change in American society as cities grew and rural laborers abandoned farming to work in newly built factories. The nation was also drawn closer together by 125,000 miles of railroad tracks that connected almost every part of the country, and an increased number of newspapers and magazines that brought the values and culture of urban areas into small towns. Furthermore, 14 million immigrants from all over the world poured into the country during the last four decades of the nineteenth century, adding to an already diverse population.

Public education hurried to meet the needs of both a new society and a growing student population. Whereas the teacher was at the center of the small, one-room schoolhouse, the curriculum dominated the larger metropolitan institutions. As early as 1856, school officials were dividing elementary students by grade and establishing a distinct course of study for each subject. At the secondary level, many students who would have sought employment after grammar school were now entering high schools, the result of technological innovations that created less need for child workers. Starting in 1892, members of the NEA began developing high school programs geared toward preparing young people to become productive workers in the industrial age, an effort that led to three distinct conceptions of curricula that competed for dominance in the educational process (Kliebard, 2004).

The *developmentalists* believed that the natural order of development in the child was the most significant and scientifically defensible basis for determining what should be taught. Led by G. Stanley Hall and his followers, this group used careful observation and recording of child behavior to create curricula based on children's stages of development. In contrast, advocates of *social efficiency* attempted to develop curricula closely related to the adult roles students would eventually occupy. Proponents of this model sought to eliminate wasted instruction time by applying the standardized techniques of industry to the classroom. The third group of reformers, known as *social meliorists*, believed schools should be a major force for social change and social justice. Stringent class divisions and other inequalities around the turn of the twentieth century caused this group to seek reform through public education (Kliebard, 2004; Miller, 1966).

### *John Dewey*

John Dewey, perhaps the most influential educator in the twentieth century, advocated progressive education as the ideal in a democratic society. According to him, "The moral

responsibility of the school, and of those who conduct it, is to society. The school is fundamentally an institution erected by society...to exercise a certain specific function in maintaining the life and advancing the welfare of society” (Dewey, 1909, p. 7). Like those involved in social efficiency, Dewey (1915; see also Dewey & Dewey, 1915) sought to do away with wasted time in school and connect useful learning experiences to real life situations. He also supported some of the positions of the developmentalists, claiming that traditional education did not account for the needs and capabilities of the individual child, thus robbing students of their desire to learn (Dewey, 1998).

Dewey also believed, like the social meliorists, that furthering democracy, equality, and social progress should be a primary goal of education. In many ways, Dewey reconciled the debate between the child study, social efficiency, and social reform movements by advocating an approach to education that accounted for all of their concerns. For him, education was intended to serve both society and the individual child (Kliebard, 2004).

Teaching methods based on Dewey’s ideas involved “learning by doing” (Dewey & Dewey, 1915, p. 70) in which social groups actively engaged with the subject matter. Dewey recommended abandoning traditional disciplines in favor of involving students in real life problem solving through projects and activities. In carrying out tasks such as building furniture, cooking, or gardening, students would learn math, science, and language in real-life settings (Dewey, 1915). Between 1896 and 1904, Dewey’s principles were tested at the laboratory school at the University of Chicago (Shiraishi, 1995). William Wirt later applied these ideas to a new school system designed for Gary, Indiana. In this institution, half of all student time was spent engaged in active learning outside the classroom (Dewey & Dewey, 1915; Mohl, 1977). Though highly successful, attempts to recreate this environment in other communities failed, probably

due to the public's lack of understanding toward such a radical departure from traditional education (Mark & Gary, 2007).

### *Seven Cardinal Principles*

Many of the values of progressive education were reflected in the *Report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education* (Bureau of Education, 1918), a document that articulated specific justifications for the high school curriculum. Known as the *Seven Cardinal Principles of Education*, these rationales included the following components:

1. Health—health instruction, physical education, promoting healthy habits
2. Command of fundamental processes—including reading, writing, and arithmetic
3. Worthy home membership—develop an understanding of the child's responsibilities in the family and preparation for future gender roles in the home.
4. Vocation—prepare young people for work
5. Citizenship—develop qualities that prepare students to become positive members of the community, state, and nation
6. Worthy use of leisure time—prepare the individual to take part in leisure activities that provide recreation of body, mind, and spirit, and the development of personality
7. Ethical character—development of the sense of personal responsibility and initiative, spirit of service, and the principles of true democracy (Bureau of Education, 1918; see also Kliebard, 2004)

The first principle addressed the physical needs of the student while the second emphasized the development of the intellect. Other principles related directly to developing individual character and preparing young people to take their place in society.

### *Progressive Music Education*

Goals of music instruction during the Progressive Era were, in many ways, the same as those of traditional education, namely the development of moral character in the individual and the betterment of society. However, beliefs regarding the way to achieve these goals were much different. Whereas nineteenth century educators looked to the internal qualities of music to transform people, leaders of the progressive movement believed the greatest benefits of music resulted from engaging in musical practice (Miller, 1966). According to Dewey (1915),

...I think everybody who has not a purely literary view of the subject [music] recognizes that genuine art grows out of the work of the artisan....All art involves physical organs, the eye, and hand, the ear and voice; and yet it is something more than the mere technical skill required by the organs of expression....It is a living union of thought and the instrument of expression. (pp. 77-78)

#### *Dewey and musical practice.*

This philosophy of music instruction was actualized at the Dewey School on the campus of the University of Chicago, where ear-training, rhythm, sight-reading, singing, and song composition were incorporated into the curriculum. Song composition was a group activity involving 4-10 students creating lyrics and melody under the guidance of a music teacher. The purpose of this activity was to enhance children's interests in music, facilitate self-expression, provide opportunities for students to face the problems of formal music study, and manipulate musical elements. These songs were then used to study theory and notation, and as performance material at school assemblies and other public events. Song composition, in addition to musical benefits, also taught children how to learn and express themselves within a group setting (Shiraishi, 1995), a primary goal in Dewey's educational philosophy (e.g., Dewey & Dewey, 1915).

Unlike the traditional approach to teaching musicianship that isolated technique in drill and practice (e.g., Smith, 1904), progressive music instruction integrated skill development into real music making situations. Furthermore, students' desires and talents were taken into account in an effort to make music valuable to them in the present, and provide opportunities to explore newly discovered interests and latent talents (Perham, 1937). Although progressive music educators advocated music listening (Miller, 1966), they also believed, like the ancient Greeks (e.g., Aristotle, as cited by Mark, 1982), that performance skills were necessary if students were to appreciate music (Perham, 1937). Over 50 years later, Kivey (1991), and Elliott (1995) stated this same principle as an important, but neglected part of music education, demonstrating the influence of progressive education in modern times.

*Music and social order.*

Although worthy use of leisure time was often given as the justification for school music, it was not merely viewed as a casual past time, but rather a vital part of maintaining social order. Miessner (1918), for example, saw the attractions of the city, cheap entertainment, and modern conveniences such as the automobile as the downfall of the family. Music, he thought, could cure this problem by socializing the home, once again making it an attractive meeting place for young people.

Music was also advocated as a means of keeping workers in tedious factory jobs content. By teaching music, educators provided future workers—"cogs in a vast and complex system of machinery"—a "safety outlet [from] monotonous, even madding" chores (Miessner, 1918, pp. 55-56). Many companies carried on the work of school music by providing bands and choruses for employees at company expense. This was not only for the good of the workers, but also the

corporation, since those with too much time on their hands may have resorted to crime, planning strikes, or other forms of social unrest (LeCroy, 1998).

Progressive educators, in an effort to prepare students for life, sought to forge connections between the school and community by using music education as the medium (Mark & Gary, 2007). The National Week of Song, for example, was initiated in February 1916 by a leading educational magazine as an attempt to involve the entire country in community singing (“National Week of Song,” 1918). According to Hall (as cited by Farnsworth, 1922),

It is a movement to help make America a singing nation. It assists in awakening and developing a national patriotic spirit, to amalgamate our people, to inspire them with high ideals, and to teach them to love good songs and good singing. (p. 22)

Community music making gained considerable momentum during World War I (WWI) as cities across the nation held war rallies and parades for draftees on their way to the front lines (e.g., “37,000 Take Part,” 1917). Though patriotic fervor ran high; the absence of husbands, sons, and fathers created the need for a sense of togetherness among America’s citizens. Music teachers helped fill this need, fostering musical experiences that connected those at home with soldiers overseas.

Peter Dykema, President of Music Supervisors’ National Conference (MSNC), encouraged every music educator to be involved in rallying the public around the war effort. In response, the MSNC Community Music Committee published *55 Songs and Choruses* in order to provide patriotic music for community singing. According to Dykema (as cited by Mark & Gary, 2007), “every time the book [was] used, the claims of public school music—from which the book arose—[were] strengthened” (p. 271).

Military leaders, convinced of music’s value in building morale, actively promoted singing by the troops during WWI. MSNC publicized these efforts to its members, encouraging

them to utilize these same songs in order to “keep the boys and girls in touch with the spirit of the soldiers—their high courage, their earnestness, their good spirits, [and] their fun” (Dykema, 1918a, p. 2; see also Dykema, 1918b). Teachers and students were also encouraged to emulate military drills, singing medleys of marching songs in the same manner as the soldiers overseas (Dykema, 1918c). Furthermore, children’s musicals with titles such as *Behind the Front* and *To Arms for Liberty* provided music supervisors an opportunity to correlate public performances with the heightened patriotic zeal of the time (MSNC, 1918, 1919).

Like the ancient Greeks (e.g., Aristotle, as cited by Mark, 1982), progressive educators were concerned that some music of the day—namely jazz—was having a negative affect on the moral development of young people. Peter A. Mortenson (as cited by Forbes, 1922), Superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools, described the social activities of youth, saying,

At one end of the road...is the home of a boy or a girl of teen age; at the other a blazing dancing place, gay seductive music—jazz music—and, perhaps a flask that makes some high school boy the envy of his fellows.

...We believe that jazz music has done much to corrupt dancing and to make it impossible for young people to learn the more refined forms of dancing, at the same time vitiating the taste for good music. (p. 15)

Chicago music teachers, in partnership with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, attempted to curb children’s enthusiasm for this new style of music by sponsoring *music memory contests*, competitions for elementary and high school students held throughout the United States between 1916 and the 1930s that involved listening to excerpts from classical repertoire and identifying them by title, composer, and other distinguishing features. Contests were held among students in one school or between teams in interscholastic competition. Though usually carried out by use of a phonograph, these events occasionally involved live musicians as well (“Children Show ‘Ear for Music’ in Memory Test,” 1922; Hilderbrant, 1922; Mark & Gary, 2007; National Bureau for



the Advancement of Music, 1925; Seegers, 1925). Describing a contest held April 15, 1922, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* stated that,

On Saturday afternoon at Orchestra Hall, Director Fredrick Stock and his symphony orchestra will cooperate with the In and About Chicago supervisors of music in a plan by which it is hoped to wean school children from the affection for jazz.

After each selection, the children will write down the name and composer. Five boys and girls from each of the city's schools will be in the audience. "The problem," declared Miss Marion V. Cotton, president of the supervisors, "is to satisfy with good music cravings of children who have surfelted [*sic*] with the excitement of degrading jazz." ("Stocks Aids Move to Ruin Craze for Jazz," 1922, p. 21)

The National Bureau for the Advancement of Music (NBAM), an association consisting of leaders from the music industry, supervised and promoted music memory contests, supplying pins, metals, and banners for events operated in accordance with their guidelines. By September 1, 1924, 1193 music memory contests had been held throughout the United States, including 1083 city, 106 county, and 4 state competitions (NBAM, 1925). The General Federation of Women's Clubs sponsored the first national contest in Atlantic City, New Jersey on June 3, 1926 (Moore, 1926).

*Performance ensembles.*

Progressive educators believed schools should provide everyone the opportunity to develop their own unique abilities. This aim was not only intended to benefit the child, but also fill the roles of society, particularly in the workplace. As a result, high school curricula originally intended as college preparation expanded to include a number of electives from which students were free to choose. New academic programs such as manual training, home economics, and various courses in business allowed young people to pursue their interests and career goals, regardless of their desire to attend college (Kliebard, 2004).

Music curricula also expanded to include a variety of performing organizations, classes in music appreciation and theory, class piano, and private study (Humphreys, 1989). High schools began offering academic credit for these courses as early as 1898 (Brown, 1916), thus providing professional training for future musicians. According to McConathy (1918),

Our schools are beginning to recognize the fact that a student who expects to become a musician has as much right for preparation in his vocation as has a student who expects to become a lawyer, a doctor, an engineer, a chemist, or a clerk. (p. 322)

School bands, orchestras, and choruses fulfilled many of the goals of the Progressive Era in that they connected the school and community and encouraged students to work together in a democratic environment in order to “cultivate the social spirit and the power to act socially” (Committee on Instrumental Affairs, 1933, p.3). Bands were also seen as a way of keeping young boys from a life of delinquency by occupying their time in productive activity and providing them a way to make an honest living (Mark, 1999). Accorded to Shepherd (1927),

Making music is probably one of the most effective moral factors in the life of a boy; and it is one of the most human. Blowing a horn comes more natural to him than listening to sermonizing. Give the boy a trumpet, a violin or drums, and he will be surrounded by an atmosphere which is one of the greatest means of salvation from the temptations of the adolescent. (p. 671)

Rationales for instrumental music during the Progressive Era were often based on the *Seven Cardinal Principles of Education* (Bureau of Education, 1918). The 1916 Lyons [Illinois] Township High School annual, for instance, cited the benefits of participation in the band to be,

...the development of good lung power [health]; an avocation to which the boys may turn in idle moments [worthy use of leisure time]; an elevation of spirit and feeling which comes from playing good music [ethical character]; an opportunity for team work where each boy tries to make the music a success [citizenship]; [and] financial returns when sufficiently advanced [vocation]. (Lyons Township High School, 1916, p. 65)

School orchestras evolved before bands (Birge, 1937), likely due to the influence of nineteenth century values that continued to affect educational practice during the transition to progressive education. Many people believed orchestral literature had important cultural value, but saw the popular music played by bands has a harmful influence on young people (Forbes, 1922; Hilderbrant, 1922). Changes in social values after the turn of the twentieth century and the affects of WWI, however, brought school bands to the forefront of music education by the mid-1920s (Whitehill, 1969).

Several circumstances accounted for the rise of school bands. First, newfound conveniences developed during the Industrial Revolution allowed workers more leisure time for pleasurable activities. As a result, the tastes of the “less cultivated” (Whitehill, 1969, p. 183) classes insisted on being recognized. At the same time, lower and middle class children were leaving the workplace and finding their way into public high schools, initiating a change in curricula that would appeal to the average, rather than the elite student. The repertoire of the school band was, therefore, viewed as democratic in that it appealed to the popular classes.

Second, school bands were perpetuated by heightened patriotism resulting from WWI. Just as community singing supported the war effort at home, so too did the parades and rallies honoring soldiers leaving for, or returning from, the front lines. School bands, compared to orchestras, were better suited for these types of demonstrations because they were a mobile unit capable of both indoor and outdoor performance (Whitehill, 1969).

Third, school bands were capable of providing music for parades and other civic functions within the community. Prior to WWI, this responsibility fell to the thousands of town bands organized throughout the country in the latter half of the nineteenth century. By the 1920s, however, the automobile, motion pictures, and emergence of jazz had changed the recreational

patterns of Americans, lessening the interest in town bands. As a result, school bands became an integral part of community life (Humphreys, 1989; Mark & Gary, 2007).

### *Post-Progressive Era*

Progressive education, by the mid-1930s, was drawing criticism for what had become a loose collection of reform ideas subject to internal division and external threat. Educators unfamiliar with Dewey's original ideas violated the main principles of the movement, as subject matter taught through "learning by doing" (e.g., Dewey & Dewey, 1915, p. 70) advocated by Dewey was often cast aside for meaningless activity. Dewey (1998) wrote *Experience and Education* in 1938 as a means of rearticulating his ideals and refocusing the movement. His efforts had little effect, and progressive education was abandoned in the 1950s when American schools began emphasizing science and math in reaction to the Soviets winning the space race by launching Sputnik, the first satellite to orbit the earth (Kliebard, 2004; Mark & Gary, 2007).

As other subjects in the curriculum hurried to defend their place in the new order, music educators sought to develop a philosophy that justified music not simply as means of imparting utilitarian values such as character development and working together, but as a unique academic discipline essential to every child's education. Brody (1958), and Leonhard and House (1959) believed that music evoked feelingful experiences on the listener, and that the main purpose of music education was to develop this sensitivity by teaching students to perceive expressive elements in a wide range of musical genres and styles.

This approach, known as Music Education as Aesthetic Education (MEAE), dominated the profession until the late 1980s when some educators revived the praxial view of music as held by the classical Greeks, and later adopted by Dewey and the progressive education movement. Proponents of this philosophy (e.g., Elliott, 1995) agree with Dewey (Shiraishi,

1995), advocating music as both a social activity and a means of individual growth. To them, the purpose of music education is to teach specific musical practices (e.g., Western choral singing, African drumming, bebop, etc.) within the context of a reflective musical practicum where students are led to “think critically, independently, and creatively” (Elliott, 1995, p. 287). Like the ideas of Dewey, the praxial philosophy of music education has the potential to be misunderstood, some believing that merely developing technical skills outside the context of a particular musical practice will be enough to realize music’s benefits.

*Conclusion: Music Education Today*

Both the MEAE and praxial approaches to music education are evident in the *National Standards for Music Education* (Music Educators National Conference [MENC], 1994), a set of guidelines drafted as part of the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (1994) that articulated what students should know and be able to do in music at various levels of schooling. Thanks to the work of MENC and a number of other arts organizations, music has been recognized by law as a core subject along with math, science, language, and history in both the *Educate America Act* and the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001).

This recognition, however, has not completely raised the status of music to that of other subjects, as many parents, teachers, school officials, and community members continue to perceive the original goals of music education—developing character and serving the needs of society—as the subject’s primary value. In fact, recent events such as the tragedy of 9-11 and educational trends centering on standardized testing have created a new interest in using music to promote social and political values in the classroom.

Current advocacy statements support this assertion. *Arts Education: Creating Success in School, Work and Life* (2006), a document signed by 60 advocacy organizations throughout the

United States, for example, states that, "...the arts equip students with a creative, competitive edge...[and]...provide the skills and knowledge students need to develop the creativity and determination necessary for success in today's global information age" (n.p.). Ruppert (2006) makes similar claims, saying that, "Certain arts activities promote growth in positive social skills, including self-confidence, self-control, conflict resolution, collaboration, empathy and social tolerance" (p. 14).

These beliefs regarding the purpose of music education are reflected in many recent curricular initiatives. MENC, for example, is currently working to raise cultural awareness and understanding while, at the same time, promote patriotism in the United States. Such efforts include the National Anthem Project (Mark & Gary, 2007) and numerous articles in MENC publications that provide resources for teaching music of the Middle East (Campbell & Beegle, 2003), Africa (Reynolds, 2005), and other cultures (e.g., Burton, 2005). Recently published instructional materials also seem to focus on extra-musical goals such as academic achievement and social development at least as much as musical concepts. Authors of the latest edition of *Share the Music*, a popular elementary music textbook series, for example, have organized units around such themes as diversity, ecology, freedom and justice, healthy living, and personal growth (*Share the Music: Master Index of Themes*, n.d.).

The fact that many music advocacy and curriculum initiatives continue to emphasize utilitarian rather than intrinsic values of music may indicate a disparity between the goals promoted by leaders in the profession (e.g., Reimer, 2003; Elliott, 1995) and those of other stakeholders in the educational process (e.g., *Arts Education*, 2006; Ruppert, 2006). Reconciling this issue is a concern for everyone looking to strengthen music instruction in American classrooms and will require all parties involved to reflect on their current position. Perhaps the

future of school music does not depend on the profession choosing between aesthetic education (e.g., Reimer, 2003) and praxialism (e.g., Elliott, 1995), or non-musical goals such as self-esteem, literacy, and success in the workplace (Ruppert, 2006), but rather on the ability of philosophers, teachers, administrators, and parents to find common ground where all the diverse needs of children can be met.

Music education has undergone significant changes in the past five decades. The advent of MEAE (e.g., Leonard & House, 1959; Reimer, 2003), praxialism (e.g., Elliott, 1995), and the *National Standards for Arts Education* (MENC, 1994) have all positively affected music's place in the academic curriculum. Nonetheless, the ultimate values of music study articulated by many people outside the classroom (e.g., Ruppert, 2006) remain unchanged from the time of the ancient Greeks. In spite of new curricular goals, music education will likely always seek to develop the character of the individual, while at the same time, preparing all children to become productive members of society.

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