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G. Stanley Hall

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MUSIC AND THE LIGHT IT THROWS UPON MUSICAL EDUCATION

By G. STANLEY HALL¹

Thought and reason and their vehicle, speech, are all three of them novelties in the natural development history of the soul. In the dim past, psychic life was very different from what it is now; feeling, instinct, and impulse were all, and they were common to the whole race, while intellect not only came late but was largely an individual product, causing people to differ from each other and stand out from the species. It is of this older, larger, deeper, and more generous soul of man that music is the best and truest of all expressions, especially if with singing we consider gesture, mimesis, and dramatic action which arose with it. Music is the speech of this antique, half-buried racial soul. It did not evolve from love calls or charms alone, as Darwin thought; nor did it first appear as a tone-colored accompaniment to speech, as Spencer's broader theology taught, for it is older than language, as Weismann, Boas, and Gaultmann have shown; while capacity for musical culture is latent in many primitive races. Birds, which evolved long before man appeared on earth, practised this art, and so did animals and even insects, the very first of all creatures to emerge from the primeval sea. Indeed, if we stretch the term to its very uttermost and make music include all acoustic expressions, the wind, rain, thunder, sea, are the oldest of all musicians, for trees and brooks came later after the land appeared.

If we abandon ourselves to the very madness of mysticism, we may say that vibrations and impacts are as old as matter, heat, light, or even atoms and electrons. Probably all energy is rhythmic and cadenced, so that in this sense the music of the spheres which Plato thought the sweetest and most symphonic of all, even though we cannot hear it, is no longer myth but science. To all these influences, protoplasm, which is the sugared-off, vital product of all the cosmic elements and processes, responded from the first, for it is the material soul of the all. This pristine rapport was closer and more all-sided before a special sense was developed for it. Thus, though man has lost many of the old and subtler

¹Address delivered before the Dept. of Musical Education, N. E. A., Cleveland, 1908.

responses and perhaps has shed a whole series of ascending rudimentary organs after them, the human ear is the result of a longer development process, which has made it the highest, and is the most specialized organ of response to vibrations. But the influence of all these buried reactions still whispers among man's central neurons ; and in his appreciations of pure music, reverberations are still awakened of the immemorial past when his personality was not yet so sphered out of the specialized in the cosmic one and all. Thus in music man may to-day dimly revive the most ancient elements and experiences in the history of his soul. If heredity is cell memory, the æsthetic reponse to music is the awakening of echoes far older than the earliest acoustic organs ; and in this process, man remembers the earliest as well as also the subsequent stages of his evolution. It is the art of arts because most pre-humanistic and also most prophetic of the superman that is to be.

It is this aspect of this sovereign art that justified, if anything can do so, the enthusiastic characterizations of it by writers like Marlo Pilo¹ that it utters the essence of things, best explains the world, is the chief interpreter of religion, that it propounds and answers the ultimate problems of life, or gives at least a mystic meaning to Schopenhauer's phrases, that it is the last word of the highest philosophy, that it is the revealer of ultimate metaphysical being of the will and soul. Only from some such viewpoint can we see light in the utterances of German æstheticians who say that music expresses all the cosmic emotions, utters every potential as well as every actual feeling, that its kingdom is not of this present but also of the future world, and that it should be because it strikes its roots deepest into the past and most securely shapes the future so that its home is in the infinite, that it shows everything under the form of eternity, that it utters all longings, even the dimmest, puts us into rapport with stars, sea and dreams, draws the ideal down from its fatherland in heaven, if, indeed, it be not the very essence of God himself.

But our problem to-day of the pedagogy and psychology of music is a practical one and can go back but a very little way toward such putative origins. Among children and savages, music has several distinct beginnings.

1. Rhythm is the first aspect which is so emphasized in all the primitive music, which seems to have a tum tum origin. Its chief features are repetitions and cadences. It is a system of beats, accents, stresses, time keepings, and markings, stepping, patting, tapping, striking, measuring arsis and thesis with the

¹Psychologie der Music, Leipzig, 1906. 225 p. Tr. by C. D. Pflaum.

feet. At first there is little content and little variety, but repetition exasperatingly monotonous to cultured nerves. A savage band is made up of drums, at first untuned, and if there is a choir, it repeats phrases and words endlessly. The child which begins by rhythmically striking one object with another or by keeping tab of sequent impressions on tallies in a series of light objects when getting ready to count, hums or verbalizes a measure over and over, perhaps slowly evolving and intrincating it, or learns to beat time, march, sway or gesture, has begun to ascend the long way by which the race began its musical development. This stage needs great and early emphasis; although on the other hand, it may become excessive and neurotic as is seen in the counters and beaters. Poetry is older than prose and everything possible in the kindergarten and primary grade should take rhythmic character. A cardinal trait of music at this stage is, therefore, that it should be marchy, dancy, motor, for it must get into the muscles. While the child may hear other music, it should attend chiefly to this kind. To exercise together without music is the ghastly mistake of Swedish gymnastics, which sins against both motor and musical development. Music should go with steps and steps with music. The young person who cannot dance is crippled in his appreciation of a certain large class of music. There are those who interpret almost all kinds of music in terms of motion, supplementing real by imaginary movements. The sentence, sense of power, all periodicity and style in speech, grace, ease and freedom, which are the poetry of movement, find here their chief source. To sit still and listen to stirring music stunts a musical development in a young child in its very bud, for it feels music chiefly as incitement to action. There have been great and precocious musical geniuses that have shot up through this stage so rapidly that it was little seen, but it is integral in normal, musical development, and the born teacher of the art best knows how to draw upon and utilize this immense reservoir of motor tendency.

2. The child best worth educating musically responds deeply and early, even if unconsciously, to the sound in nature, the first music master of the race. The sighing of the wind through the pines stands out uniquely in its effect upon the sensible soul of childhood. It may even cause tears without consciousness, for it plays upon the very organism. It is felt in most as sadness and restlessness, while the susur-rus of the breezes among the leaves of deciduous trees is early pleasing and exhilarating. The wind is a band-master, loved or feared, according to the loudness with which his orchestra plays. The rattle of the hail, the drip and patter of rain, the silent fall of snow, the roll of distant and the crash

of near thunder, the ripple of streamlets, the roar of waterfalls, the beating of waves, and all the many voices of water are great music teachers. Then, too, there are the symphonies of bees, crickets, and even mosquitoes, the humming, droning, booming buzz of larger insects, the piping of tree toads and frogs, even the cries of the *feles et canes*, each has a varied tone language of its own to the young. The bleating of sheep, the lowing of herds which give pastoral moods, the call of the wild and the cry of the squirrel kind. Above all, the birds, the lonely hoot of the owl, the despairing cry of the loon, the caw of crow and daw, the scream of the eagle and hawk, the clapper of the heron, the cooing of the doves and, above all, the song of the warblers which one observer says never sing but only laugh out of a heart overflowing with joy; each one of these sounds and many more carried with it a whole stage setting of psychic moods; and these the tone poet simply must feel abundantly, often and early. Living creatures do not talk to each other for they have no vocabulary of words, but their utterances are all of them either love-calls, warnings, danger signals, and are more musical than verbal. Some are lullabies, others madrigals, or philippics or notes of defiance, or murmurs of parents to their young, and some are voices of the day, others of the night or storm. They suggest the heath, the prairie, moreland, thicket, mountain, meadow, brook, the spring when the migrators come, and the fall when they go. These are the things that have played on the soul through all the immemorial past, have controlled its moods, and have still a strange power to call up imagery. Snatches of these field antiphones are, what many careful experiments show, that music suggests to all responsive souls. It is these influences that should not be evicted by the music stultifying noises of the city, which cause it to focus on erotic, even decadently erotic, themes. So far as music is an interpreter of nature, the child must have heard, felt, varied influences, or else musical training leaves him untouched, because there is nothing in his soul to interpret.

3. Song is story, and to the child is the nourishing root of all musical culture. A musician who never sang or at least hummed to himself or herself can never possibly feel the full power of instrumentation. He must at least hear song in his throat or something vital is lacking. Song, too, must have a burden, and programless music comes later. The dark bard is inspired by his theme and pours forth unpremeditated song, because he is drunk with his theme, and therefore carries his hearers away. So the great lyrists from the restored Apollo to the gypsy fiddler of to-day in his own habitat play music that to them is crammed full of meaning and content deeper

than words and with which they weave their spell. Hence, too, the musician must know the great tales of time and men and be inspired by them, so that he can learn to let himself go with abandon; and his powers of sympathy must be utterly untainted by criticism. Story roots of love stronger than death, a vengeance where man is a powerless agent of the Fates, of piety and devotion that immolate self for something greater than self; among these the composer finds his Muse. Hence, the pupil must know and feel the great mythopoeic cycles, especially those of the ancient Greeks, Homer and the dramatists and the Germans, the Saxon *Arthuriad*, the *Nibelungen* and the rest. All such legendary and heroic lore cannot be properly told save in poetry and music to which they incline and inspire the soul. Thus literature of this class should be the hand-maiden of art. Above all, Biblical literature and the religious instinct should be cultivated. So, too, patriotism and the flag and the great historic events and golden deeds of virtue, home, native land, country, and religion are the great themes in all the consensus of children's preferences in music. Love comes later and comedy and parody are still later and far less.

4. As to instrumentation, wind instruments that are blown come nearest the heart. The pipe was first after the drum, and to play these is singing with a proxy larynx, while breath and feeling are ordinarily very closely akin. Thus even the young, even near the age of self-consciousness and emotional repressions, can still express a sentiment naturally, and school bands are as hygienic for the feelings as they are for the lungs, and from Plato down all have praised martial strains of this kind for youth. But in soulfulness, we must agree with Gardiner¹ that the violin stands first, hard and late as it arose. Each string has its distinct character. It requires and trains great accuracy of ear and touch, and bowing is the best expression of music which the hand can make. Perhaps in nothing does it come so near being the direct organ of the heart. How the Hungarian fiddler in his home and native music hugs passionately, caresses his instrument, and gets, as Paganini did, the most sympathetic and tumultuous response that ever instrumentalist won from a crowd! The violin is the school instrument in Germany where most is done in music. The ready-made notes and tempered scale of the piano and organ are farther off and their technique is far less expressive of the musical theme. The mandolin is a tasteful decoration of bric-a-brac for a sophomore's room, but is it quite virile for the American man? It affords our stal-

¹ *Nature of Music*, Boston, 1838, p. 505.

wart college barbarians in evening dress an opportunity to line up before the audience and strum accompaniments in three chords to the simple ditties carried by the more expert few. Or is not even the banjo less lady-like and evirating? I do not know; why do not you musicians tell us? Alas, the pedagogy of music is yet in its diaper and swaddling-clothes stage till we know more of the psychology of the chief classes of instruments, each of which does different things to the soul.

5. You music teachers should now keep closest tab on this new movement for children's theatres which promises great things in the near future. Music and drama are twin sisters and have grown up together in the closest dependence one upon the other. Mimesis, gesture, acting, are probably like music, older than speech itself. New studies show how most school children at some periods of their lives show a veritable passion for cheap shows, of which there are fifteen hundred of the nickel and dime order in New York alone. Their passion is to see and feel passion. They long to be thrilled, and their appetite for excitement is legitimate, for it must be had or the child is dwarfed; and we can do little to determine whether it shall be on a high or a low plane. In New York, censors inspect plays and those they find clean are open to scores of thousands of young people at reduced rates, and supplement their school history and literature and give moral uplift, draw off bad instincts, on the principals of katharsis, and perform future choices aright. Good operettas come in and music now needs and is just beginning to have pedagogic censorship by similar boards, which have growing power to determine success or failure or good and bad things upon the stage in our large cities.

6. Keep the technique duly subordinated—pray ponder this; is it not just as absurd to teach the children notes and the scale before they have learned a repertory of songs by rote, as it would be to teach reading before the child learns to talk? The prime end of musical education in the grades is to train the sentiments, to make children feel nature, religion, country, home, duty and all the rest, to guarantee sanity of heart out of which are the issues of life. To this, technique and everything else should be subordinated. Again, you must sing to the children if you can only croon or intone poetry. I would have a pianola in every high school and college with a few score of well chosen selections. In pubescence when the life of sentiment awakens, probably music has its very most potent influences in stirring and expanding the soul. Much school music is now chosen merely with reference to some scheme of pedagogic, systematic progression. Much method here is a sin against the holy ghost of music itself.

Every tune introduced should have a moral and æsthetic justification and should be admitted to the school canon only after careful deliberation and for good and sufficient reasons. And then and only then will music be rescued from its present abject subordination and given its rightful, commendable place in the curriculum, as the trainer of the feelings which are three-fourths of life.

7. And lastly, I wish music teachers would read a little more, and see their work in the larger light now dawning. They might at least know Pilo, Gardner, Wallace,¹ Wallaschek,² possibly even Guerney,³ not to add Darwin, Spencer, and Weismann's dilettante and hypersubtle theorization. Then there is the second part of Helmholtz's masterpiece *On the Sensations of Tone*, which gives the history of music on a scientific basis. There are other works by Ritter, Paine, Henderson, Nerlich, Köstlin, Bartholomew, Stumpf, who thinks that purity of music and race type come together, that the male voice was once very high, and that woman first began to sing, and that use of practicality has caused the development of music. Then there are the simpler results of the study of children's choices, from discriminations of pitch, from their range of ear, their sense of timbre, the imagery that music excites, which Gilman and Downey have studied, and even the responses of infants to music; while Dr. Theodate Smith is preparing a work on the psychic reactions to sound by infants and children, and fuller studies are being made upon imitation.

¹*Threshold of Music*, London, 1903. 269 p.

²*Primitive Music*, London, 1893. 326 p.

³*The Power of Sound*, London, 1880. 559 p.