

15. Music

Friday, March 24, 1:30 P. M.—Mr. R. D. Hughes, Presiding

PRESENT CONDITION OF SUPERVISED TRAINING IN OHIO

Chairman's introduction: The fact that the subject of music was admitted this year for the first time to the State Educational Conference made it imperative to adopt a program scheme which would discover to the music teachers of Ohio the actual condition of supervision and training in our state. To this end the general questions mentioned in the papers were asked. While the answer are not especially gratifying, they are candid; and the optimism and determination evident in the face of conditions which would justify despair promise much for the future of music in the schools when a state organization of school music teachers shall have had time to develop and carry out some plan.

2. Richard M. Tunncliffe

Director of Music, State Normal College, Bowling Green, Ohio

In giving the discussion today, I shall follow the very suggestive questions given me by our chairman, Mr. Hughes, when he assigned the questions for discussion

Do superintendents and school boards recognize music as an educational factor?

Yes, I believe the *think* they do; but in the real sense of the word, they have very small realization of the purpose or value of public-school music as an educational subject fit for a place in the school curriculum. Both have the wrong viewpoint; and of the two, I believe the superintendent is the more difficult position. Both consider music of value chiefly as something to fill in and it is used a good deal as the music we hear at a reception—to cover up confusion or to furnish a background for the animated conversation of the guests. At our chapel exercises at home we sing a hymn while the students are getting settled, while a few late-comers are finding their seats, and while the regular program is being made ready. Again, we sing another hymn between the regular part of the program and the announcements. If they want to fill in the gap while waiting for some late notices, we may sing another. We never think of practicing singing. In the past year I have had just seven minutes for the practice of chapel singing. I was asked to have a small group of girls sing at a banquet a short time ago. When we got there I found that we were expected to take the place of an orchestra which was to play during the serving of the meal—to cover up the noise of rattling silver, dishes, and so forth. Rather strenuous work for six ladies' voices! Again, our male quartet was to sing at a large gathering recently. We sang at the opening while the late-comers were being seated; and then after listening to speeches for two hours, the chairman announced, "We are all tired of sitting still so long, and while the quartet favors us with another selection, let us all stand and move about so as to rest our legs a little." I could mention many other instances which have led me to say that I do not think superintendents appreciate the value of the true purpose of music.

Perhaps some of you are thinking, "Yes, this is a common condition"; but what are we going to do about it? The question presents itself, whose fault is it? I believe it is the fault of the teachers of music that the subject is not taken seriously by the superintendents and school boards. We do not take ourselves or our subject seriously enough. If we did, we would not allow these conditions to remain unchanged very long. This attitude is both cause and effect. Many music teachers enter the field with little appreciation of the bigness of their problem. They can get a position with little or no training and the fact that superintendents and boards have no ideals enables them to keep their positions.

I could cite many cases to prove this point but will mention only one. A short time ago a young woman came to see me and wanted to find out how long it would take her to prepare herself to teach public school music. I asked her if she wished to enroll in the regular course given at the college. Her reply will state the case very clearly. "Oh, no," she said, "I am a teacher of piano and am busy most of the time, but thought I might take a position in our schools to fill in a little extra time I have, and thought I might come in a few times on Saturdays so as to get the methods." She couldn't understand my attitude when I tried to show her that it would be impossible for one to get a sufficient knowledge of public school music in three or four lessons to enable one to teach it. I know that many teachers with similar preparation are trying to teach music in the public schools. I believe that some of the conservatories of music are responsible for poorly trained teachers who are working in the public schools. How often students who fail to become the great artists their fond relatives anticipate are turned loose in the public schools with no adequate preparation to teach public school music.

Do superintendents, principals, and school boards appreciate the value of good training?

I believe they are not competent to do so. Many of them have never had any experience with a system of schools in which the music was well taught and hence have no ideals, at least no proper ideals. In several schools with which I am familiar, the teacher of music is concerned chiefly with getting songs ready for rallies, getting up plays, operettas, and so forth. Some few are offering courses in so-called musical appreciation, which consists in hearing a lot of records played on a phonograph. Others are offering courses in theory or harmony—formal music training built upon little or no musical experience.

With such conditions is it to be wondered at that many of us feel we are in a critical stage in public school music in Ohio? In many cases I find the supervisor blames the superintendent, and on other cases the opposite is true. I believe the superintendent often has a wrong idea, as has been suggested above. He has been so accustomed to dealing with poorly trained teachers that he does not expect much. He frequently does not see beyond football songs, minstrel shows, and so forth. He has a wrong idea concerning the teaching of musical appreciation, and does not realize that musical appreciation which does not involve a reaction on the part of the pupil is really not appreciation. Another reason for this lack of ideals on the part of the average superintendent is that many of them, while well-trained professionally, have had little cultural education. Men who have had to sacrifice everything while putting themselves through school have missed experience in music and art during the period of life in which these things most vitally appeal to one. I believe that the causes for the

seeming lack of appreciation on the part of many superintendents is to be found more deeply hidden than most of us realize. May I say here that probably the supervisor's greatest task is to give the executive officers and the community at large a right ideal as to the purpose and value of public school music? Only the well-equipped and broadly trained supervisor can do this. Nor can much be done in cases where the teacher remains but a year or two in a place.

What is the attitude of the teacher-in-training to the more rigorous requirements?

I would say excellent, except in a few cases where they think (have been led to think) that public school music is only a side issue. These are usually cases of conservatory-trained people mentioned above.

Is anything being done to educate school administrators in the smaller cities and towns to the importance of selecting only well-prepared teachers?

I answer "no" to this question. The president of my college told me when I was trying to get some indication upon a graduate's diploma which would show the student's musical attainments that he had never been questioned concerning a graduate's ability to teach the music of her grade. I believe there is small interest in this very vital matter. It is unfair to criticize the normal schools for lack of ability to teach music on the part of their graduates, when the question is never considered when a grade teacher is hired.

Are students being prepared to teach, in the beginning years of experience at least, the newer and important subjects of harmony, musical appreciation, etc., and are they given an understanding of the school orchestra?

I can speak only in reference to my own college and will say that the students in the special music course are getting such preparation. I feel that we have much to do in this line; but with a new course of study to be followed next year, we hope to be better able to send out well-trained teachers.