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# Song Literature In Primary Grades 

By Ann Trimingham



HE intelligent educator needs no argument on the value of beautiful songs as a major part of child education. However he may feel that in his contacts, singing seems to have very little connection with the rhapsodies of poets and that music functioning through song does not occupy the place that it should but has in some way been devitalized and perhaps cheapened. He has, as a result, a bewildering sense of helplessness in trying to assist or advise the ineffective and inadequate teacher of singing.

Let us consider the function of song literature in music education. Music appreciation should receive its first impetus through carefully selected songs in the primary grades. In fact, as in all education, the early impression will in many cases be the deciding factor in the musical development of the child. Lovely songs should familiarize him with the simplest and most fundamental elements of music and through them should open to him a fairyland of melody and poetry that will stimulate in him a desire for a larger and more thrilling contact. These songs should weld together
many educational experiences, correlating music and poetry, music and nature study. music and history, music and geography and should become an indispensable part of his life through education.

Songs may also be used as a recreational feature in school life. All socially constituted groups have recognized this healthy, happy and stimulating way of organizing and releasing emotional reactions. Here again the matter of song selection is the crux on which the whole project may turn. Any experienced play or song leader will tell you that many a cause has been lost through failure of the leader with the group. No one knows how much of this has been caused by careless song selection.

To many teachers, the use of song literature as a basis for the study of the architecture of music may seem its principal function. Too much emphasis on the technical structure of music, has made singing a lost cause in many schools and songs must not be wrung dry of all their emotional appeal and intrinsic beauty by the rigorous and conscientious development of the "problem". The understanding teacher will keep in mind first the child and then the subject and will not impose on him method
at the expense of real appreciation. Songs should provide a delightful means for developing musicianship and since detached drills no longer occupy their former place of importance, songs will afford a background for the development of every new technical experience in music. Almost all the basic texts now in vogue in our schools have recognized this fact and have arranged material and teaching manuals in a very helpful way.

The selection of suitable songs for children is an art in itself and there is a wealth of material from which to choose. The basic texts of the day have been carefully organized and as each new series is published it brings to us new life through more carefully planned material. These texts are especially strong for primary grades and recognizing the fact that children need much variety and can gleam something from many songs, they are stressing rote material in all primary grades; that is, a large diet of rote material and a relatively small diet of study material. The idea being that children gain much more feeling for music through singing really fine songs than through plodding along continuously in material that is simple enough for the child's first sight-singing. A rich background of songs taught by rote, should be given before sight-singing is introduced.

There are three general groups of songs to be used in all music education:-
a) Folk and National Songs
b) Classical Songs
c) Songs of the best modern composers. In the primary grades folk music should predominate. It gives to the child the foundation of all musical development and furnishes the purest type of musical form and structure. It is childlike in its appeal and expresses beautifully all the primitive instincts, thereby belonging to us all. It has strong rhythmic and melodic vitality which has carried it through the ages.

Of the other two groups, classic songs and modern songs, there is a treasure house of matreial, used most successfully with small children, when built on folk song lines. Almost all great composers have given us lovely bits of melody, which set to suitable text are delightful for children. Modern writers are feeling more and more the value of giving something singable to the little child and in addition to their rich contribution to the school texts, they have composed interesting song cycles and collections.
A few general suggestions as to the type of song suitable for the young child might
be practical for the school music teacher. The text should receive very careful consideration. Children will sing and memorize interesting words even though their singing bears no tonal resemblance to the music heard. The words must mean something to them and care should be taken that the thought expressed is not that of the reminiscent adult. Idealism can be perfectly dereloped through fine poetry set to a lovely melody. By this I do not mean those horrible songs now in vogue in some places, that discuss brushing teeth, washing hands and drinking milk. Such a use of music is a sacrilege and any obvious teaching ó morals or good habits through song is entirely beside the point. There are other places in the curricula for their development. The effect of poetry and melody on the child should be to so fill his mind with the beautiful that ugliness will be displaced. The songs selected should be short, preferably four to eight phrases in length. Children fatigue quickly, can only concentrate a short time and need constant change of activity. A long song usually proves deadly to the little child and he reaches the point of fatigue long before the song is taught.

The vocal hazards should be studied. Range should be confined to the tones on the treble staff, e-flat to $f$-sharp, involving the head roice. The rhythmic and melodic content should be very simple with much repetition of pattern and enough variety to constantly give the child new experiences. There are several methods of teaching songs by rote. Perhaps the one most used and advised in many teaching manuals, is the process of matching phrases after the entire song has been heard. That is, having the child imitate each phrase after it has been sung by the teacher. To get the best results the text and the music must be phrased alike and must be given to the children correctly. The phrasse are usually four measures in length and afford a natural pause in the march of the rhythm. This method is perhaps constructive in more ways than any other, because it maintains automatically good breath habits and developes the ear and the vocal response. The resourceful teacher will teach a song in many different ways, singing it as a whole several times, or approaching it with some rythmic activity through the melody, before the words are presented. She should be able to quickly change her procedure and adjust it to the mood and feeling of the class or the material.

In conclusion, it might be said that no teacher needs to resort to cheap, hackneyed
or uninteresting material in this day when so much that is beatiful is thrust into our very hands.

# Sustained Listening* 

By Albert H. Radcliffe

If those of us who are endeavoring to train children in the art of listening intelligently to music have one problem of outstanding importance and difficulty to solve, it is that of developing in our pupils the ability to sustain interest throughout the performance of a musical work.

We are hearing much just now of the success of concerts for children, of the readi-. ness with which children respond to firstrate music, especially in these days of new methods and broader opportunity, but keen observers and honest thinkers are beginning to wonder whether such abundant optimism is justifiable. A listlessness, often very general, has been noticed in the audiences at children's concerts. In schools where listening lessons have been given for a period long enough for them to be no longer a novelty, the same thing is often apparent, and sustained attention is frequently conspicuous only by its absence.

The Board of Education's recommendation that "special attention should be paid to developing the capacity for artistic appreciation as distinct from executive skill" has been carried out in increasing measure, but can we claim that results are commensurate with effort expended? Have we sufficiently borne in mind that it has taken most of us years to acquire our present ability to appreciate music, for the simple reason that music is a language having an idiom very definitely its own, and that, although we may always have been attracted sensuously by certain aspects of music, the ability to follow the development of thought in a musical work has been acquired only gradually.

Without this ability, sustained listening can be expected of nobody, and it behooves us to ask ourselves whether present methods are developing it in our scholars.

Let us review the position.
We are giving lessons in musical biography, history, and form, in harmony and so forth. By such means, we can arouse a broad and helpful interest in the makers of great music, we can show how music has developed as an art and the part it has played in the life of the community, we can help children to appreciate musical design

[^0]and shape, we can sharpen ears to a very valuable degree, but have we yet definitely touched the very vital matter of getting at the heart of the music? Have we not regarded the manner of the message rather than the message itself? Is it not rather like endeavoring to study style in a foreign language before the language itself is truly understood? I very much doubt whether all the time devoted to the consideration of musical form is being wisely spent. Why should we expect children to derive pleasure from the mere contemplation of shapeliness in music Are they much attracted by such ideas as form and pattern in other walks of life The average child desires things that have life, or the semblance of it, things that move or that will induce motion. Are we wise in laying so much stress on the more static aspects of music? Furthermore, does anything very vital to the child arise out of his memorizing of chief themes, or out of his recognition of them when they recur? The mere walking of a person across a stage is an unimportant affair in itself, although it may become tremendously significant if related to the action of a play. Do we endeavour to establish any such relationships in music when themes reappear, or are we satisfied with the mere recognition of a previous acquaintance?

It is this unconnected aspect of our work that I feel is at fault, this undue emphasizing of the importance of isolated moments. It is good and helpful that both we and our pupils should note themes, particularly if these are beautiful; patches and sweeps of beautiful coloring should attract our attention, and phases of emotional intensity cannot pass unnoticed, but real appreciation of the music is not attained until we see all such features as parts of a whole, as contributions to the development of the musical thought.

Let me say that the foregoing criticisms express primarily my dissatisfaction with my own work and, additionally, the opinions of others similarly employed, who are critically minded. The underlying feeling is not that nothing has been achieved, but that more might be; not that anything so far taught is unnecessary, but that the less important has tencled to exclude the essen-tial-conditions, let it be said, which are inseparable from all such experimental work as we are doing.

I have been led, therfore, to devote considerable reflection to the subject of musical thinking in its relation to sustained listen-
(Please turn to page 145)

## Thy (Iatrilia

REV. JOSEPH J. PIERRON...........Editor OTTO A. SINGENBERGER...Associate Editor

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## Sranditug and © Timarus



Fun in y things are always taking place in Chutch music.
There is a touch of humor, unconsciously of course, in the things one hears sung for offertories and postcommunions at funeral masses. Without irreverence, we have observed how vastly the influence of movie music and technique is being felt at the consoles of organs in our choir lofts. The dramatic aping of grand opera has long been giving even the most cautious souls a deal of pious merriment.

But none of these little incogruities is more amusing than the solemn stand taken by many of our modern apostles of Gregorian Chant in face of what they themselves are actually doing to carry out their program. The situation is like a band wagon on which numbers of intellectual enthusiasts are climbing without knowing just where it is heading, or like

Einstein's theory of relativity as a polite subject of conversation which a mighty few knows anything about, or the weather which no one is doing anything about. When all is simmered down, we find an imposing array of articles and resolutions-of talk and more talk. The amount that is being said is amazing. What is being done is not so important.

Only a limited amount of energy is given us. Perhaps we would tackle the problem better by leaving off preaching the beauty, and all that, of the Chant , and beginning to convince the world and ourselves in particular by giving the Chant a chance to talk for itself. If we admit that its exalted mood of meditation and mystic calm is a bit foreign to the hip, hip, hurray spirit of twentieth-century America, then the task of making Gregorian Chant prevail begins where our vocabulary leaves off. The solution seems to be: less talk and more honestly patient work.

## SINGING WITH THE RIGHT INTENTION

Already St. Thomas had to refute the objection which is frequently made in our days: that the chorists are prevented, by the attention they have to pay to their notes, to their director, etc., from entering into the spirit of the sacred text, and from eliciting feelings of devotion in their hearts; and are thus not only not as devout as others, but much less so. There is some truth in this. Even pious and devout singers, who are obliged to pay strict attention to their notes, will frequently feel less impressed and ardent than others that pray private prayers. However, if they sing during divine service with the right intention (viz: to promote the honor of God and to edify the faithful), God will certainly esteem their less exalting and, for them, less pleasant work, and reward it as liberally as that of others who pray or sing "from the fulness of their heart."

It should always be kept in mind that singing, reciting the words of the text, is by no means a mere prayer of the mouth (as many seem to think), even if the chorist, at the moment when he pronounces the sacred text, does not expressly recall to his mind the meaning of what he is saying. This could be characterized

## 1. Rythmus S.Thomae ad Sacram Eucharistiam.



H. TAPPERT.



## 3. 0 Sacrum Convivium.

H. TAPPERT.



## 4. 0 salutaris hostia.


5. 0 salutaris hostia.

> H. TAPPERT.


## $129$




## 6. 0 vere digna hostia.



H. TAPPERT.

8. Tantum ergo Sacramentum.
H. TAPPERT.



## 9. Tantum ergo Sacramentum.





H. TAPPERT.



## 12. Laudate Dominum.

Ton. VI.


Cantores.


## O SANCTISSIMA.

Andante con moto.
C. GREITH. I.

pi - is - si-ma,
et
re - fu - gi-um,
per - quam fle - bi-les, ma - ter, ad-spi-ce,
et su - spi-ri - a


as a mere oral prayer only, if the intention of reverently speaking to God were entirely excluded, or had been wanting to the singer from the very beginning. How do we not esteem and appreciate it when a little child, on the name's-day of its parents or pastor, recites a short congratulatory verse, which it has carefully memorized, and naturally pays more attention to the single words, and the order in which they follow one another, than to the sense intended to be conveyed, which, in fact, it may not even understand. In like manner we are all little children before Almighty God. Our singing will be equally and even more agreeable and meritorious before Him though our attention may be partially or even entirely directed towards our notes, the organist, or director, etc., than the fervant prayers which we would have said during the same time in quiet devotion. Yet we must never forget that the good intention of performing our duty in the choir as it should be performed, being a sacred action, and a part of divine service, should always be in our heart. Let us, therefore, as soon as we enter the choir, make the good intention that we will employ all our powers to the honor and glory of the Lord.

## UPON WHAT THE VALUE OF PRAYER DEPENDS

"Let us beware"-as the learned Benedictine of Solesmes has it-"let us beware lest we become of the opinion that the time employed in singing in the choir could more profitably be devoted to private prayer or to meditation. For the value of prayer does not depend in the eyes of God upon the number of thoughts that strike our mind, nor upon the words which are pronounced by our lips. It depends rather upon the purity of our faith, upon our grati-. tude, humility and love; if they are excited in us they move our mind, and make our lips eloquent. Not the heart that gives vent to many words, but the one which knows to excite within itself the purest and most glowing acts of faith, humility, etc., will most effectively expiate its failures; the Lord will hear its fervent expressions of gratitude and love and adoration and will grant its petitions. True piety, of its own accord, pours forth its sentiments in song; while the latter, on the other hand, kindles devotion. Thus one fosters and increases the other; thus they vie with one another incessantly, like two mirrors facing each other, which seem to reflect an image anew forever, carrying it, as it were, unto unfathomable depths."

## SUSTAINED LISTENING

## (Continted from page 119)

ing, and certain conclusions are here set forth in the hope they may prove of some value to others.

All are aware that there is no difficulty in obtaining sustained attention during the reading of a story, provided the language is intelligible to the listeners, and the story itself attractive. The reason, of course, is that there is a consistent appeal to the child's native curiosity as to what is going to happen next. It is a dull story that does not lead its hearers on by its own onward urge or rhythm.

Now, if we believe in our fundamenta teaching rule, "From the known to the related unknown," is it not obrious that the first steps in sustained musical listening should be, not with absolute music, but with story music. The story having been told in terms the children can understandi. e., in simple English language-its retelling in musical terms, through less intelligible, is now not unrelated to previous experience, and therefore stands some chance of receiving sustained attention. In addition to actual story music, there are works which can be treated as such without doing them violence. There is much music on a small scale suitable for our purpose, and such longer works as the following have proved in actual use to be quite valuable:

$$
\begin{aligned}
& \text { 'L'Apprenti Sorcier' .............. Dukas } \\
& \text { 'Till Eulenspiegel' (portions)....Strauss } \\
& \text { Overture, 'Der Freischüitz'........Weber } \\
& \text { Overture, 'Oberon' .................Weber } \\
& \text { 'Polnnia' . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Elgar }
\end{aligned}
$$

Picture music, it should be noted, is rather a different proposition. Children, as a rule, will not gaze long at a picture, nor at a piece of scenery, and if we are going to give them music portraying scenes and the like, the examples must be short if interest is not to wilt.

What is to be done, however, about absolute music? Here we have music speaking in its own idiom, and unrelated so far as we know to anything external. It is obvious that until the children can think easily in musical terms, sustained interest in absolute music is not to be expected of them. Can such thinking be assisted in its development, or is experience the only teacher? I an inclined to the former point of view. Having been.considerably impressed by the great importance attached in the writings of Mr. Tobias Matthay to a full appreciation of the principle of onward movement in
music as a basis of musical understanding, I have for some time been exnerimenting on myself, on school children, and with adults interested in music. In my own case results have often been as striking as they have been gratifying; in other cases signs are distinctly encouraging.
It all amounts to a careful consideration of the part played by rhythm in its larger aspects, and the application to our work of the principles revealed. For a full understanding of all that is implied in the term "towardness" used by Mr. Matthay, the reader must be referred to his written works, but it should here be stated quite clefinitely that if onward movement-so evident in the building-up of a climax, for in-stance-be once consciously grasped, it will be seen that great claims can be made for it. It defines musical phrases-each phrase is a progression to its rhythmic climax; it demands expression in the performance of phrases-the progression is shown by inflections of tone and time; it indicates how logically phrase grows out of phrase, and thereby definitely reveals a gradually unfolding significance in the music; an emotional climax becomes, not an isolated and merely sensuous thrill, but the natural goal of a well-planned journey, every moment of which has made its enjoyable contribution to the attainment of an objective; the recurrent appearances of chief themes are not merely places where one must make a mental note that an old acquaintance has turned up, but they are perfectly opposite contributions to the logical development of the musical discourse.
It will be seen that when conditions of listening rhythmically have been perfected -which, of course is a matter of time-we should be able to expect much more sustained listening, since we have circumstances as nearly as possible identical with those ruling when a story is being related. The language is now intelligible, and the sustained appeal to curiosity is being made. One must, however, utter a warning. In testing his work, the teacher must not expect his children to put into words what they feel the music has said. This is manifestly impossible; firstly, because the language of music is more subtle, and can touch finer shades of emotion and feeling than the language of words, the latter in consequence being an inadequate medium for the expression of anything uttered in the former. In the second place, although intellectual satisfaction is essential to the appreciation of beauty, or to the ultimate, unhampered appeal to the emotions, the emo-
tional effect itself is beyond intellectual explanation. Sustained listening thus becomes practically the only test of the success of one's efforts: actually no other is required.

It will be observed that no new conception of music or its teaching has been advanced, but attention has been directed to a very vital matter, the possibilities of which have not been sufficiently explored. Conversation with music teachers employed in schools and elsewhere reveals rather a widespread ignorance of the importance of this fundamental principle of progression in music, and if it is only because we cannot as yet claim a very large measure of success in our work, this further aspect of music teaching should, I feel, receive closer study and wider application. When the teacher has fully grasped the complete rhythmic principle for himself-and it should take him but a comparatively short time, although he must not expect too much of the children, with their limited experi-ence-he can work out his own plans for 'applying it to his work. He will probably find that the best course to adopt will be to arrange a series of steps, identical with those which marked his own development in the art of sustained listening.

## Studies of Phrasing

(Continued from May, 1930, Issue)

## IV. RESPIRATION

Many of our singers find it strange to be told how to breathe properly while singing. Their rule, generally, seems to be, "Take breath at a bar," a rule which in most instances is wrong. Correct respiration is as important as difficult. The musical effect of singing depends on the manner in which the breath is taken, distributed, retained and disposed of, while the declamatory effect depends on suitable stops for breathing, viz., where the musical and dramatic connection suffers a momentary interruption. In singing, the breath should flow out steadily and without a break; at the same time it should be under sufficient control to be retained and modified at discretion. That manner of respiration is correct which allows and promotes a long and steady expiration, producing and sustaining the tone with the smallest amount of air. It should, therefore, be the aim to inhale as much air as possible in the shortest time, and to use it slowly and evenly, producing the fullest tone with the least breath. Respiration must
be steady and noiseless and not appear hasty. Since the power of the tone depends on the breath, the singer should accustom himself to inhale deeply. Let the pupil always draw as deep a breath as though he had to sing If, and then start as softly as if he had taken no breath: $i$ and $e$, particularly, should be sung only $p p$ in the beginning. Successive deep breathing is, however, injurious to the chest and lungs. As in writing we use commas before reaching a full pause, so in singing we should take a full breath after various partial respirations. Expiration requires at least as much attention as inspiration. Before singing, the breath should be held back for a moment, then used gradually, not suddenly, and distributed in well calculated proportion to the different degrees of power ( $p p, p f$ and ff).

It is only with difficulty that we can determine by special and exact rules where and how to draw breath. It is self-evident that breath can be taken whenever a rest occurs. It is necessary to take breath before a long group of notes, before syncopated notes, which should always be accented, and before parts that require much breath, as $p p$. cresc. and dresc. Sections, cesura and punctuation admit of breathing. It is decidedly wrong to breathe in the middle of a word or musical phrase, or to separate by breathing what is fiterally and melodically connected. There are, of course, exceptions to these rules. Should it still become necessary to draw breath during a phrase, it is better to do so after a long note than a short one, better after the down-beat than the up-beat. This can, however, be only a short breath. The time needed must be taken from the value of that note after which, not before which, breath is drawn; in other words, breathing should be done at the expense of the previous note, in order to let the following tone enter at the proper moment. Breathing, in ancient polyphonic compositions, occasionally presents considerable difficulty. In modern works the breathing places are generally indicated with a short vertical line. This is a laudable custom, since the minority of our singers know where to breathe. In common time, where text and melody permit, it is best to take breath before the last, or after the first part of the measure, (not at the bars.) The effect of a chorus is greatly enhanced by the simultaneous breathing of the choir. Respiration, in the Gregorian chant, adapts itself exactly to the rules of literal declamation. It is well to practice deep breathing and to sustain the tones with equal or variable power, avoiding depression of the voice (flattening).

One of the best exercises in breathing is to sustain a tone for a long time, causing it to swell and diminish, repeatedly, in one breath. It is not necessary in this practice that the repeated messa di voce with the same breath be executed artistically, with the gradual swelling to the highest power and returning to pianissimo; the difficulty to be overcome by this study lies rather in retaining and saving the breath (ritirare and riscrvare), because the pupil urges rapidly from piano to $m f$ and forte, and returns in the same manner to diminuendo, learning thereby to reserve sufficient air to effect, repeatedly, such a somewhat impetuous, but yet approximate gradation and diminution of the volume and impulse of the breath. Such exercises are well suited to prepare the pupil for the real, artistic execution of messa di vioce. In conclusion be it remarked that in manner of life and clothing, all that is prejudicial to breathing must be avoided and that, on the contrary, an upright, free and easy attitude, with chest bent forward, a proper opening of the mouth, a quiet, flat position of the tongue, etc., promote correct respiration. V. INTONATION

Without a pure and perfect intonation all other advantages of singing are of no account. Strictly speaking, we cannot call it singing, if each new word, each new start of the voice appears impure and faulty. It requires, with a good choir, the most careful study and the strictest attention, especially in the first exercises, to acquire the art which is explained in the following few words. Each new tone, though soft, must be from the vary start, sound definite and perfectly clear, without any previous audible preparation. This seems very simple, and yet, how seldom has a beautiful and noble intonation been realized.

The attention of the pupil must be drawn to some of the most common errors which will, besides the above positive rules, give him some negative rules that point out what is to be avoided. Before pitching a tone, some singers sound one or more tones, thus reaching the proper tone by means of a bridge, as it were. These preceding tones, although often given hurriedly and in a flighty manner, are distinctly perceptible to a cultivated ear and of a very disagreeable effect. Such previous and intermediate tones are observed mostly in the portamenta, especially when it occurs in distant intervals, which a poor singer executes with the addition of a whole string of audible notes. This very offensive fault is called by the Italians Strascinare, meaning to drag through. Other singers sound an $h$, $n$ or an $r$ before every word and think it must escape the ear of the hearers, because they themselves do not notice it. There are still others
who accompany each respiration and start of the voice with a sob, or groan, thinking that this kind of intonation would lend great charm to the expression. Others, again, produce in the start or intonating not at all a cognizant tone, but rather a sound, an audible numbling or humming which is transformed into a real and often even beautiful tone only in crescondo and forte; but a tone may be ever so beautiful, it is worthless, if indistinctly started or intonated. The fault set forth last (which by no means exhausts the list) as ridiculous as it may appear in the description, is a very general one and often peculiar to such as boast of possessing excellent training. In conclusion it may be mentioned that imperfect or even impure intonation is not always a criterion by which to determine on the deficiency of the ear of the singer. If the ear is defective, intonation can never be good; but if the ear is perfect, intonation may be defective. A poor intonation should therefore be considered a fault in singing as well as indistinct pronunciation, improper and clumsy breathing, a poor formation of the tone and so on. Therefore it is necessary to strive to attain by most zealous endeavors, a clear and dignified intonation, and not cease until this indispensable condition of a good singer is achieved.
(To Be Continucd)

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