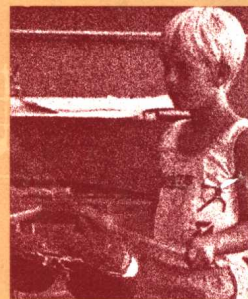


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Introduction to Music Education

CHARLES R. HOFFER



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Preface

IN THE PAST few years a number of colleges have instituted an introductory course in music education for prospective music teachers. The purposes of the introductory course are to provide students with an overview of the field, to acquaint them with the process of teaching, and to encourage them to consider themselves in terms of becoming a teacher. Usually this course precedes the methods courses in which the students learn techniques for teaching various aspects of music.

For the most part, instructors in the introductory course have relied on lectures and assigned readings from journals and textbooks to provide the subject matter. Lectures and assigned readings are only partially successful in this course, as I learned when I taught it. The students can read the materials (if they have not been misplaced) only in the library, and they have to resort to taking notes on the lectures. My experience with this arrangement convinced me that a book would be a much more efficient and effective means of providing information to the students. And so the idea for *Introduction to Music Education* was born.

In considering the topics to be included in an introductory book, I realized that certain chapters not dealing with methods in *Teaching Music in the Secondary Schools* would be useful. Therefore, these chapters have been adapted slightly and included in this book. In addition, three new chapters have been written.

Introduction to Music Education is divided into six sections. The first deals with the process of teaching music and music teachers. The next four sections introduce students to the four aspects of the teaching process: why music is a part of the school curriculum, what is (or should be) taught in music classes, how generally music should be taught, and with what results. The book closes with a chapter on the music education profession.

Theoretical and practical considerations are combined whenever possible in this book, because each aspect is vital and each influences the teaching of music. The writing has been made practical, clear, and alive, and it speaks directly to the reader at some points.

I would like to thank the many persons who encouraged and enlightened me in my efforts to be a teacher and writer. Citing a few

names here would not be fair to the greater number who would not be mentioned. I can only thank them as a group, therefore, and hope that this is adequate. Specific recognition is due Linda Crowe of Southeast Missouri State University for her review of the material on Jaques-Dalcroze and Eugenia Sinor of Indiana University for her review of the material on the Kodály approach. I also wish to acknowledge the following persons for their reviews of the manuscript: Barbara Bennett, Baylor University; Russell A. Hammar, Kalamazoo College; William D. Hughes, Florida State University; Gary M. Martin, University of Oregon; Samuel D. Miller, University of Houston; James Scholten, Ohio University.

Charles R. Hoffer

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Introduction To Music Education



I

Music Teaching and You

AN INTRODUCTORY BOOK or course in music education logically begins with a look at music teaching and music teachers. The quality of teaching has an enormous effect on the results, which is part of the reason for starting with teachers and teaching. The teacher bears much of the responsibility for guiding the teaching process so that learning can take place.

Teachers who truly understand that process have a much better chance of guiding it successfully, which is another reason for beginning with teaching and teachers. An understanding of this process is a solid foundation on which the other aspects of being a teacher can be developed. Chapter One briefly describes this process.

Chapter Two examines the characteristics of the people who guide learning in music, the teachers. Should they have a particular type of personality? What competencies should they possess? Are good music teachers the result of special inborn qualities, or are they developed through knowledge and hard work? These and other questions should be of interest to anyone considering music teaching as a career. With a better understanding of what is needed to be a successful music teacher, the prospective music educator will have a basis on which to look at himself or herself in terms of being a music teacher.

So You're Going to Teach Music

C H A P T E R O N E

IF YOU ARE PREPARING to teach music in the schools, you have chosen a profession that is interesting, challenging, and important. To begin with, it involves working with music in all its infinite variety of types and styles—and its beauty and enjoyment. There aren't many jobs in which a person can work with one of the arts; people who operate computers or sell auto parts or thousands of other jobs don't enjoy this privilege.

Then there are the students in the schools. Whatever else may be said about them, no one has accused them of failing to make things interesting and lively in classrooms. Students come in all shapes and sizes, and they have widely differing interests and abilities. A set or "cookbook" approach to teaching them music will often not be successful because of the great differences among them as individuals and the wide variations among the thousands of teaching situations across the United States. Imagination and intelligence need to be applied in coming up with ways to meet the challenges and opportunities these differences offer to every music teacher. For these reasons, among others, music teaching is not for the lazy or fainthearted.

In addition to being interesting and challenging, teaching music is an important field of work. For reasons that are described more fully in Chapter Three, music and the other fine arts should be included in the education of every student. They are too much a part of life in contemporary society for the schools to ignore, and they are too vital in people's lives for anyone not to be informed about them.

Where do you start in learning how to teach this interesting, challenging, and important subject? A good way to begin is by making sure you have a clear idea of what the words *music* and *teach* really mean. Although their meaning may appear to be obvious, they both have implications that are basic to what music teachers do or should do. First, the word *music*.

What Is Music?

The nature of music seems like a simple matter, but is it? Is a crash of a cymbal or an eerie sound from a synthesizer music? Why is a boom from a bass drum considered musical and booms from other sources thought of as noise? The difference is not so much in the sounds themselves as in the context in which they are heard. If they appear in a planned sequence of sounds, then they become music; if not, they are just random noises. The key to the matter is organization. In fact, music has often been defined as “organized sound.”

The organizing of sounds in a span of time is something that human beings do. Music was not preordained by the cosmic laws of the universe and therefore something that people find. Music is created by humans for humans. It is a human activity, and it varies in the forms it takes as much as other human creations like language, clothing, and food.

The world of music is vast and complex. Not only does it include all the music that people have created—folk, symphonic, instrumental, vocal, electronic, rock—it also encompasses musical activities such as singing, listening, analyzing, and creating. In fact, music is both an *object* in terms of being composed or improvised works and a *process* in terms of the actions involved in producing or reproducing music.

The vastness of the world of music forces teachers to make choices about what to teach and how to teach it. Fortunately, the definition of music as organized sounds does offer a clue to the most important responsibility of music teachers: guiding students to understand and appreciate organized sounds. The processes of performing and creating music often help in achieving this goal. For example, creating melodies helps students to understand better the organizing of sounds, and so does singing or playing melodies on a clarinet.

Sometimes teachers emphasize one aspect of music so much that other aspects are largely ignored. Some teachers, for example, concentrate so much on the techniques of singing, playing, or creating music that the students never get around to understanding where the activity fits into the world of music. In other cases teachers devote so much attention to factual information that the students fail to think of music as an art form consisting of organized sounds.

Successful music teaching requires a balanced view of the world of music. Both musical objects and processes are needed, as is a variety in the type of music the students study. And both information and activities should be related to organized sound.

What Is Teaching?

Teaching is the organizing and guiding of the process in which students learn. Simply put, a teacher's role is to bring about the acquisition of information, understanding, and skills by the students. The way in which this role is accomplished can take a number of dif-

ferent forms. Sometimes it consists of providing the students with information, while at other times it involves setting up a learning situation and then stepping aside as the students work on their own. In some instances it means deciding on tasks for students to do individually, while in other cases it consists of leading a group in a unified effort such as singing a song. Whatever form the teaching takes, the essential characteristic is that the students learn. Results are what the process of teaching is all about, not the particular actions teachers take when working with students. It is important not to confuse the essential goal of teaching with its different styles.

The definition of teaching as a process in which students learn also has implications for the attributes of teachers. Although a teacher may exhibit charm and good looks, lecture brilliantly, manage a classroom well, and use this or that method, if no learning takes place, he or she has not been successful as a teacher. In fact, occasionally (but not typically) a person who appears to violate the usual assumptions about what is needed to be a teacher turns out to be highly effective in getting students to learn. Teaching is so subtle and complex an endeavor that such a situation can happen every so often.

Teachers' jobs usually include duties in addition to leading the learning-teaching process—checking out instruments, taking attendance, keeping order in the classroom. Most of these duties are important and necessary, but they are not really part of the process. A person can be a good manager of classrooms and still not be a good teacher.

The Components of Music Teaching

What is included in this process called teaching? When all is said and done, it comes down to five simple but basic components that can be stated as questions: (1) *Why* have music in the schools? (2) *What* should be taught in the music class? (3) *How* will it be taught? (4) *To whom* will it be taught? (5) *What are the results?* Because these questions are the essential elements of teaching, they form the basic outline of this book. Each component is discussed in subsequent chapters, but first a brief introduction to each.

Why Have Music in the Schools?

The most basic question concerns why there are music classes in the schools and teachers to teach them. The answer to that question should provide teachers with a sense of direction, and to some degree it affects the answers to the other four questions of "What?," "How?," "To whom?," and "With what results?" Teachers who lack a clear understanding of what they are about are like rudderless ships floundering in the seas of education.

Different answers to the question of "Why?" lead to quite different practical actions. For example, a teacher who sees school music primarily in terms of entertainment for the public teaches quite differently from a teacher who tries to give students a better understanding of music as organized sounds. These two teachers will choose different types of music, teach different skills and information, often use different methods, and evaluate their teaching and students differently.

Fortunately, it is not necessary to return to the question of "Why?" when thinking about every class or rehearsal. If you can express your reasons for teaching music with a reasonable degree of confidence, your answer can give direction and consistency to your teaching. However, it is a good idea to rethink from time to time the fundamental reasons for teaching music. Maturity, experience, and changed circumstances call for a periodic review of a person's views. The topic is too important to be decided once and for all at the age of twenty. Develop some solid answers now to the question of why music should be taught in schools, but don't "chisel your beliefs in stone" this early in your career.

What Should Be Taught in Music?

The question of the content of music classes deals with the "stuff" of music—musical works, facts, fingerings, patterns of sound, understanding of the process of creating music, interpretation, and similar things. It includes all types of information, skills, and attitudes, and it should light the spark of creativity and individual expression within the students.

Deciding what to teach is an enormously complex matter. As pointed out earlier, the world of music is huge, which makes choices about what to teach difficult. Other factors also contribute to the complexity of making these decisions, including practical considerations such as the musical background of the students, the amount of time available, the traditions of the community, the size of the class, and the amount and type of materials available.

It must also be remembered that students learn not only in music classes or under the guidance of teachers. After all, students spend only about 1000 of their 8736 hours each year in school, so it is not reasonable to credit or blame the school for everything students learn or know. The fact remains, however, that not much learning or understanding of music will usually take place without organized, competent instruction in school.

Unlike the question of "Why?" the matter of what to teach needs to be spelled out specifically for each lesson or class. It isn't enough merely to "put in time" in music. There should always be clearly stated objectives in terms of what the students are to learn.

How Should Music Be Taught?

This question of how music is taught focuses on the ways of organizing and structuring instruction, as well as selecting the manner of presentation. Some people who have never taught falsely assume that teaching is a job in which you merely stand up in front of the students and talk. If that were the case, teaching would indeed be easy! However, that is not the way it is, even if some experienced teachers make it look easy, just as a fine violinist makes the difficult passages of a concerto sound effortless.

The suggestions in methods textbooks are geared to what might be called the "typical" school situation. Readers should realize, however, that there are almost no typical schools, and certainly each student is unique. The ideas presented apply to perhaps a solid majority of all teaching situations. As much as an author would like to, it is impossible to offer specific ideas on how to teach music in each of the thousands of schools in the United States.

The difficulty in specifying procedures for all situations is not characteristic of several other professions. For example, since nearly everyone's appendix is in approximately the same part of the body, surgeons can be taught a specific surgical procedure for its removal. Unfortunately, human behavior is much less consistent than human anatomy. Not all students have the same interests, musical background, and mental ability. For this reason identical teaching procedures sometimes produce exactly opposite results in different classrooms, especially when different teachers are involved. Part of the challenge of teaching is being adaptable enough to meet a variety of situations.

Deciding on which methods are most appropriate for teaching specific material to a particular group of students is one of the challenges of teaching. Suppose a teacher wishes to teach a second grade class to sing a song with pleasing tone and accurate pitch. Because the song is simple, it presents the teacher with no technical obstacles. The children are enjoyable to work with and tractable, offering the teacher few problems in guiding the class. The challenge comes in presenting the art of music so that it becomes meaningful to the seven-year-old youngsters. How can the contour of the melodic line be impressed on children who don't know what the word *contour* means? How does a teacher make second graders conscious of the pitches and accurate when they sing them? Certainly not by merely telling them, "Watch your intonation!" How can the phrases of the song be presented so that the students will understand better the function of phrases in the song? Does a gentle sweep of the arm really aid children in perceiving phrases, or are there other means that would be more effective? These questions have just scratched the surface of the pedagogical matters that are involved in teaching a song.