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By

James L. Mursell

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Music and the Redefinition of Education In Postwar America

JAMES L. MURSELL

MY TOPIC IN THESE TWO ADDRESSES¹ is the place of music in the educational reconstruction which is sure to follow the war, and which indeed is already under way. We want music to be a primary, universal, recognized, and honored concern in the American education of the future. We want this, not for our own sakes, but because we know that here is a priceless element in our common spiritual heritage which should be transmitted ever more amply to succeeding generations, and because we are sure that a musical America will be a better America. If music is to take its rightful place in years to come, we have before us a problem of strategy in the widest sense, a problem of realistic statesmanship; and it is in this sense that I shall deal with the matter. I do not propose to talk Utopianism or to argue for a special theory. The effect of every great war is to speed up existing social and cultural tendencies, and to hasten denouements and solutions which otherwise would be long delayed. This is certain to be the effect of the present war upon American education. In the next few years, patterns will crystallize and the shape of things to come will be determined. So if we are to act wisely and with success, we must discern the major educational trends of the present day, and understand how our own special interest is related to them as they hasten toward fulfillment.

This, of course, is a very large subject, and I think that, for the sake of clarity and to provide foci for subsequent discussion, it may be best for me to present what I have to say in the form of four propositions, dealing with two of them today, and two tomorrow.²

First Proposition

During the past twenty-five years American education has established a decisive trend, and this will move rapidly toward fulfillment after the war.

Those of us who have lived and worked in the arena of American education during the long armistice often fail to realize how extraordinarily momentous, how big with promise these two and a half decades have been. As a matter of cold historic fact, there has never been a period anywhere, any time, since the dawn of civilization, which has seen a comparable educational rethinking, criticism, planning, experimentation, and reconstruction. The special issue of the progressive school has been only one small part of the drama, and probably not the most significant. A great creative ferment has been at work throughout the whole fabric. Our educational system has been moving toward maturity, growing swiftly away from the Old World tradition, and establishing its own distinctive practices, patterns of operation, and controlling ideals. Much of the confusion and doubt in many minds is due simply to the swiftness and magnitude of the development.

ED. NOTE 1: The addresses referred to were given at the Eastern Music Educators Wartime Institute, held in Rochester, N. Y., March 20-23. What follows here is the complete text of the first address.

ED. NOTE 2: Mr. Mursell's second address, covering the latter two propositions here mentioned, will appear in the May-June issue.

The merest skimming of statistics reveals the drama, even though it does not make the full plot apparent. In the draft army in the First World War, 5 per cent had some college training, 16 per cent more had some high-school training, and 79 per cent had only a grade-school education or none at all. In the present draft, 11 per cent have college training, 58 per cent have some high-school training, and 31 per cent have a grade-school education or none at all. During the intervening two and a half decades, high-school enrollments have gone from less than two and a half million to nearly seven million, and college enrollments from about three hundred thousand to a million and a quarter. Such advances in so short a period are dramatic and significant to the highest degree. They indicate an extremely powerful social and cultural trend, a potent momentum which is far from exhausted because it stems from the basic conditions of modern life.

Together with this has gone a reformulation of basic educational purpose; and although one often feels that practice has lagged far behind theory, if one compares its progress in this period with happenings in other ages, and considers the enormous difficulties involved, one realizes that it has actually moved forward with surprising speed. I believe we can confidently say, on the basis of an objective survey, that the past five and twenty years have seen American education shift its ground from the traditional emphasis upon subject matter to an emphasis on the molding of human life in terms of current realities and actual needs and conditions. This, let me insist, is no mere article of sectarian or "progressive" doctrine. It is what actually has been happening on a comprehensive scale, and any groups which fail to reckon with it will find themselves left behind in the developments of the future.

To make my point clear, let me touch on certain outstanding events.

(a) Just at the close of the last World War the National Education Association put forward a platform of aims for the modern school—the famous Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education. The gist of this document was very simple. It did not mention a single curricular subject. Apparently one could have a good school which taught none of the recognized subjects. It merely insisted that education must deal with current concerns—with home life, with leisure time, with citizenship, with health, and so forth. If this had been the pronouncement of some clique of radicals, one might have brushed it off. But it came from our most authoritative educational body. And it elicited a landslide response. School systems everywhere set to work to make over their programs in terms of this idea. It quickly appeared that the job was tougher than one might suppose. But never mind—large-scale attempts were made. The idea evidently appealed to American educators and to the American public as eminently sensible and sound. The Cardinal Principles may have been

superseded, but they never have been repudiated, and the idea they contain has found ever-growing acceptance. Here, surely, is a portent for all who have eyes to see. What does it mean for us? The more we treat music subjectwise, the more we tend to sidetrack it. The more we organize it in intimate touch with the actual lives, the actual interests, the actual needs of human beings, young and old, the further we bring it into the main current of educational development which is shaping the future.

(b) Another significant development has been the rise and growth of the Progressive Education Association. Inaugurated in 1919, it now has more than 10,000 members. The name of the Association carries with it a misleading suggestion of sectarianism, which is unfortunate, for the essential ideas it represents are not sectarian at all, but a perfectly sound response to very real conditions. As long ago as 1873, in the schools of Quincy, Massachusetts, a dramatic protest was made against the extremely routine, machine-like, and remote character of our rapidly developing educational system. Universal schools, it was insisted, cannot properly be mere lesson-setting, lesson-hearing mechanisms. They must serve the universal and real needs of human beings in the actual conditions of their lives. This, in my opinion, is the central idea for which the Progressive Education Association has stood. Its theoretical soundness can hardly be questioned. And the swift growth of the movement, and the widespread attention and even the hostility which it has aroused, are further evidence that such a way of thinking and planning is no Utopian dream, but a force in practical educational politics with which all of us must reckon.

(c) Yet another extremely significant happening has been the development of comprehensive and radical state-wide programs for the improvement of instruction. These have gone on in many states, and some have been more constructive and successful than others. Among the best are probably those in Arkansas, Virginia, and Florida. When we find numerous state educational systems actively reconsidering their premises and reconstructing their practices, this surely is an indication which only the blind can ignore. What focal trend do these great enterprises exhibit? The best of them do not operate in terms of uniformity. The state organization sets a pattern of goals. And it urges and encourages the local schools to reshape their work for the realistic attainment of these goals in terms of the actual and immediate needs of the communities and the human beings with whom they deal. These enterprises are large-scale attempts to make American education alike more purposive and more realistically serviceable than it has been in the past. So once again we move out of the realm of theory and into the realm of practical educational politics. We in the field of music education cannot refuse to reckon with changes so palpable and so impressively large.

(d) Yet another significant happening has been the radical revision of accreditation standards and conceptions. Every schoolman knows that under our American system the great accrediting agencies exercise a paramount influence. In the past these bodies have operated in terms of predetermined and rather mechanical notions of what ought to be taught, how it ought to be taught, and how schools should be conducted. But recently there has been a striking liberalization. The great accrediting

agencies—the North Central and other—now propose to appraise a school in terms of its own goals, its own problems, and the excellence and insight with which it undertakes to meet them. It is, in fact, a character of freedom; and like all freedom it constitutes a challenge. The schools are invited to think in terms of realistic service and realistic leadership for those with whom they deal, and to cope with the actualities of the life around them. If New York State is still cramped and fettered by the deplorable system of Regents' Examinations, all one can say is that in spite of its many excellencies it is in this respect out of step with one of the major trends of the present and the future.

(e) Lastly I may mention the truly portentous incursion of the Federal Government into the educational field. The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Association undoubtedly had many faults, failings, and limitations. But they were forthright and necessary attempts to deal with a crying need and a cogent problem which will not down. They are institutional expressions of the truth that the education of young people must be based upon living need and social reality. The same most emphatically holds of what is the most successful and constructive of all Federal educational ventures—the Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture. These agencies came into being because they had to. Whether we like it or not, they are setting new patterns which will profoundly influence the future. Some minds are much exercised by the fear that they may emerge into a machine in competition with the existing school system. I predict that unless our present schools show that they can meet the needs of life much better than they have in the past, the new and newly oriented Federal agencies will not only compete with them, but submerge them.

So, all in all, the main movement of the past twenty-five years has been toward a new realism, a recognition that education must be concerned not with the transmission lessonwise of a predetermined subject matter, but with the actualities of human life. We in music education have much less to fear from such developments than have certain other groups which might be mentioned. The interest we represent really can be brought in touch with human life as it is really lived. Music forced into a subjectwise pattern is music distorted. Indeed the present trend is one we should heartily welcome. The future of our work depends in no small degree upon the intelligence, the clear-sightedness, the statesmanship with which we adjust that work to a tendency which will play right into our hands if we will let it.

Second Proposition

It is possible to discern certain foci in the development of American education in the years after the war.

Certain great changes have been taking place in American life for many years past. These are being accelerated and heightened by the impact of the war. They profoundly affect the future of education in general and of music education in particular. In fact all of them greatly favor our special interest, if we shape our policy and point our strategy with respect to them.

(a) First we are confronted with a falling birthrate, and a smaller number of children in proportion to the population as a whole. In 1800 there were 13 children under five for every 10 adult white women; now there

are only 5 children under five for every 10 adult white women. In 1840 there were 989 adults for every 1,000 children under five; now there are 1,583 adults for every 1,000 children under five. For the moment, under the special conditions of the war, the trend has been reversed, but there is every reason to believe that it will speedily reassert itself with increasing momentum within a very few years.

Now how does this bear on education? One's first thought is that it means smaller enrollments, first in the elementary schools, and later on in the secondary schools. But there is far more to it than this. On the constructive side, its clear implication is the qualitative improvement of child life. There will be a larger and larger percentage of the national wealth available for the service of each child, for the reason that children are fewer. Families become smaller, so that the child recedes more and more from the status of an economic asset to his parents, which he used to be, and becomes more and more a moral responsibility and a prized privilege. The concomitant of the family with fewer children is more family concern for each child. I predict that the American family of the future will be less and less inclined to tolerate the machine-like regimented school which served the swarms of fifty years ago. And this bears most intimately on our own interest. The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe might consider music a fad and frill. Poor soul, she had to scratch for a bare living for her embarrassing brood! But the American parent of the future will increasingly want the best and richest that life and school can offer, for his ewe lamb and for his buck lamb, too. And music is one of the many forms of enrichment and illumination which the school can bring to the child as the home cannot. So if we are wise we shall rethink the whole problem of bringing music to the young child. We shall not be content with procedures whose main point is to bring to him a smattering, if not of ignorance, at least of the most routine and uninviting aspects of the art. For we shall be dealing more and more with a clientele which will increasingly appreciate and demand the enrichment and stimulation of beauty in the lives of their children.

(b) The American people are living longer. In 1850 the average expectation of life at birth was 40 years. Today the average expectation of life at the age of one is approximately 62 years. It is a most striking gain, full of social and cultural consequences, and replete with educational implications. The combination of a longer life-span and a lower birthrate always goes with better and richer conditions of living throughout. An increase in life expectancy of more than 30 per cent means a vast change in controlling outlook. It means a people less and less oppressed by the stark immediacy of vocational concerns, a people more inclined to explore the great number of things contained in this fascinating world, a people more apt to set a high value on ample and varied schooling. An educational system suitable for a population which dropped off at forty becomes extremely ill-adapted for one which sticks around till sixty-two. So we can confidently believe that our own interest, so admirably suited to bringing added richness, happiness, release, and stimulation into the drama of human existence, is right in line with one of the most potent tendencies which is shaping our social and educational

future. And above all we need not imagine that the future of music in the schools depends upon forcing it into an unnatural pattern of routine lesson learning. We need not fear to make music enjoyable, for the longer people think they will live, the more they want the joys of living.

(c) The social and economic forces which are shaping America are creating new vocations. The distinctions between upper, middle, and laboring classes, or between professional, semiprofessional, artisan, and laboring classes are receding into a dead past. Fifty years ago the career of a radio announcer or an airplane hostess would have seemed as incredible as any fantasy of Jules Verne. Innumerable such incredibilities are on the way. And this again is full of meaning for education. Public schools tacitly regarded as suitable chiefly for the children of the laboring classes have already become fantastic, with the children of these brand-new vocational groups coming more and more into the picture. These new groups will expect much from life, for both themselves and their offspring. They will have pleasant homes, reasonable incomes, stimulating jobs, adequate leisure and security. We shall not have to apologize to them for making culture in general, and music in particular, a living reality for their children. In fact, apologies will be in order if we do anything else—if we neglect the arts, or impair them by schoolbound routines rationalized by preposterous theories to the effect that the value of a study is directly proportional to its unpleasantness and sterility.

(d) We are moving into an era of growing vocational postponement. As mechanical advances reduce the number of man-hours required to operate the economy, preference is pretty sure to go to older workers. The tendency was already very conspicuous in the thirties, but it is not due to special depression conditions, and we may expect it to continue with added momentum after the war. This means that growing numbers of young people from eighteen upwards will not have found their work in the world. To imagine that our colleges and universities as at present constituted will or should take care of them is fantastic. But it would be equally fantastic and indeed ruinous to leave them to the tender mercies of the poolroom, the local filling station, and the gangs. Institutional arrangements on a very large scale will be a compelling necessity. They must be educational in the true sense, although an attempt to follow the lesson-setting, lesson-hearing patterns of the conventional school would be hopeless. Here is an immense opportunity for music education. We are going to have a potential clientele of millions of young people, at a responsive and formative age. Music can certainly have a great appeal for them, and it is our task to achieve the creative vision and muster the resolution to meet this enormous opportunity.

(e) There is reason to believe that we are moving into an era of intensive investment. In times past, the resources of America have been devoted largely to expansion—to the development of our natural resources and the increase in size of our urban centers. But now, with population leveling off, with the continent occupied, and with no more huge developments like the automobile industry in sight, those resources must go increasingly to improving the quality of what we have. Better rather

than bigger communities, ampler and more costly human services, a richer and fuller living for our present population rather than more and more people—these are likely to be the foci of America's future. It is most striking that an interest such as music should have gone so fast and far, even in our expansionist era. But the era of intensive cultivation should favor it much more decisively. So once again we need not hesitate; we need not apologize for music as an enriching influence in human life; we need not try to excuse it by reducing it to routines. The more courageously we emphasize its aesthetic values, its cultural values, its social values, its

human values, the better for the cause we have at heart.

To bring music more effectively to the very young child; to enrich the musical experiences of the elementary-school child; to organize more compelling and engaging musical experiences for the adolescent and the young adult; to present music as a richly repaying lifelong concern; to present it as an adornment, an enhancement, an agency for elevation and delight, which is to make of it a repaying lifelong concern—these are the directions in which we ought to move, if we wish to take full advantage of the forces which are shaping our national future.

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THIS is the text of the second of two addresses given by Mr. Mursell at the Eastern Music Educators Wartime Institute, held in Rochester, N. Y., March 20-23. It represents a continuation of the first address, printed in the April issue, in which he presented the first two of four propositions to be taken into account in finding the place of music in the educational reconstruction which is certain to follow the war.

Third Proposition

We must reckon with certain far-reaching changes in educational practice and adapt ourselves to them and adopt them in our work.

There is a very popular but most peculiar and quite inadmissible notion abroad in the world that the teaching profession is very apt to stampede in the direction of any new theory, to scramble to put into operation any new practical suggestion which happens to emerge. Why such an idea ever gained currency it is hard to say. As a matter of cold fact, it takes an average of about fifty years between the development of a new feasible proposal and its adoption in the schools on any considerable scale. Compared with the medical profession, for instance, we are a group of timid conservatives who tremble with alarm and cluck with indignation at any new suggestion, rather than rushing to embrace it. The proper heraldic symbol for the National Education Association would certainly not be the enterprising and investigative jackdaw, but rather a limpet welded to a rock old.

Certain influences and tendencies, however, both inside and outside the schools, have been piling up for a long time, and it seems extremely likely that with the impact of new necessities the whole log jam of pedagogical procedures will move. We and our colleagues are extremely likely to find ourselves jerked into waters which to some look uninvitingly strange and chilly. But we in music education, at least, have no cause for alarm. Conventional school practices have never been kind to music. In the elementary school they have tended to make it as much as possible like grammar and arithmetic. They have built up a preposterous overvaluation of the most arid aspects of theory and musicology. Their constant drag has been in favor of intellectualization and against enjoyment and creativeness. Conventional school practices rather than any reasonable and considered reflection have been responsible for the persistent relegation of applied music to an inferior status, apparently on the view that playing an instrument or using one's voice is a mere mechanical routine with about the same cultural and educational value as cracking stones on a rock pile. So, if we know what we are about, we have a great deal to gain and nothing to lose from the changes in practice which seem to be impending.

What then are these changes likely to be? Among them the following, I believe, will be among the most important.

(a) The first will be a lessened proportion of formal teaching and learning and a larger proportion of informal teaching and learning. This is something which has been persistently advocated ever since the Quincy, Massachusetts, new departure seventy years ago. Its most conspicuous advocates have been those who recommended what was called first the project method and later the activity movement. These proposals, of course, have elicited the sort of clucks of alarm and rage of which I have spoken, so reminiscent of the response of a hen roost to the wheeling shadow of a hawk. But in spite of its rather deplorable labels, which are always apt to stick up like so many sore thumbs, increasing informality of instruction really is a major trend in American education today, and it is backed by forces whose magnitude no one can afford to ignore. We find it in the recognition that a sharp division between curricular and extracurricular activities is untenable, and in very concrete plans to overcome it. We find it in the reluctant but fairly widespread introduction of "activity periods" in many schools. And the report of the Rapp-Coudert Committee, which specifically recommends less formal and more informal instruction in the schools of New York City, is a portent in the heavens and an indication of what the future is apt to hold.

Here is a trend in which we in music education can find nothing to fear, and which offers us many and great advantages. Why is it that in the past so much of our work has centered in the teaching of notation, the teaching of techniques isolated from use, routine classroom practices, and the use of made-to-order material obviously lacking in inspiration, interest, and aesthetic value? No one could claim that such practices are either musically or educationally sound. It is true that certain farfetched theories have been trumped up to justify them. By such methods, it has been claimed, children will learn concentration, application, docility, quickness of response, and the power to reason and analyze. One finds it interesting to notice that no one seems to have said that procedures of this kind would lead children to learn music. Why, then, have they been so widely adopted? The reason is not theoretical but practical. They fitted the conventional patterns of school keeping. One could feel that one was doing the right sort of job, if one made music as much as possible like any other school subject. This seemed the practical and safe line to follow, and certainly it called for a minimum of constructive imagination and caused a minimum of trouble all around. Well, it is no longer safe, and will become less and less so year by year. If we cling to it, we shall find first supervisory officers and then the public asking why music lags behind the pro-

cession. More and more we shall be expected to work in terms of free, though not unguided, social situations for the enjoyment and performance of music, in terms of stimulating creative undertakings, in terms of richer and more vital content. The tendency toward informality in education strongly emphasizes everything that is most constructive in our movement, and everything that is most forward-looking in our present practices and viewpoints.

(b) The second major change, which also is already establishing itself in American educational practice, is a transformation in our conception of standards and in our ways of enforcing and assessing them. Here, too, is something we should warmly welcome as directly consistent with our own best interests and desires. The prevailing mechanism of standards in the past has been the grading system. This has implied, above all, uniformity. One cannot grade properly without a uniform, one-dimensional criterion. Otherwise there is no meaning in a statement of just how much better one pupil has done than another. And so the whole machinery has been set up on the basis of giving the same opportunity to all the pupils in a class to show just how well they can do with reference to one another. But music essentially and inevitably resists any such strait-jacketing. How can one compare in a straight-line sequence the concert master of an orchestra with the tympanist? One child sings beautifully, but another, who manages his voice much less well, achieves a creative attempt of real charm and sincerity. How express the situation in percentile terms? It cannot be done. Music is essentially diversified, not uniform, and the better and more genuine musical experiences and activities become, the more they resist uniformity. And so with us the grading system has always been a travesty.

The strong tendency is to abandon grading in the conventional sense and to substitute a comprehensive statement of the facts of the pupil's personal growth, and of his reactions of all kinds to the situations he meets. In terms of standards so understood, music education can be conducted naturally enough. What does the pupil do with music? What does music do with and for the pupil? Such information is the true and valid basis of standard setting, and it is altogether more meaningful for all concerned than some trumped-up percentage or ambiguous letter of the alphabet.

One sometimes hears it said that the school which sets standards in terms of personal interests, personal activities, and personal development is creating a privileged environment, different from that of ordinary life. In the work-a-day world, so it is alleged, people are judged only on what they produce, just as they are judged in school on the grading system now fading out of approved practice. The idea is preposterous. Does an up-to-date personnel department ignore the intentions, the personal problems and successes, the developmental tendencies of individual employees? Does it consider immediate results and absolutely nothing else? Of course not. Neither does a court of law; neither do your friends; neither does your wife! Human beings do not normally treat each other on any such hard-boiled, inhuman basis. Just go around giving people you deal with percentile grades based on immediate achievement as defined by yourself, without considering

their endeavors, their characters, their difficulties, or any offsetting achievement of any kind, and see how long you will last. Every decent impulse of human society is to treat its members as struggling, failing, achieving human creatures, with an immense and complex spread of excellences and defects, and not as mere result-getting automata. This most assuredly is how we ought to treat children in school. And above all it is how we in music education ought to treat them.

(c) Yet another major practical trend in our educational practice is toward richer and more active reciprocal relationships with the local community. American education is set up on what is by implication a community basis, even though the average school district is not an effective functional human or social grouping. More and more this community aspect of our enterprise is coming to the fore.⁴ As we are coming to see it, the school should be a radiating center of community influence and community betterment. The local social group should be a better place in which to live, throughout the entire texture of its affairs, because of the activities of its school. This implies no dualism, no distinction between educational and social responsibilities, for the young child is best and most effectively educated by an institution which helps him as early as possible to appreciate the meanings, responsibilities, and opportunities of junior citizenship.

Here is yet another direction in which our music programs ought to move, if they are to meet the future. Music is not something which ought to be kept within the school classroom, or even within the school building. The school, in bringing music to the children of the community, at the same time should be helping those children to bring music to the community. This means concerts, pageants, festivals, music for special occasions. But it means a great deal more. Is school music getting into the home? Are songs and pieces learned in school sung in the home? Are compositions heard in the school listened to and enjoyed in the home? Does school music affect the music in the local churches? Are informal uses of music growing out of the school program? If not, something is wrong — wrong with the materials, wrong with the practices, wrong with the whole educational slant and direction. A program of music education which, as the years pass, is not learning more and more effectively to function in, for, and with the local community is a program which is retrogressing. The workers in it are cutting the ground from under their own feet. Most assuredly they are not in the way toward inheriting the expanding future which surely should be theirs.

(d) A fourth major trend which is likely to increase in momentum is that toward all-school autonomous planning within the school. We have passed through a primitive stage when all policies, procedures, and curricular decisions were determined by the administrative officers alone. We have passed almost through a semiprimitive stage in which isolated specialized groups of teachers were invited to prepare courses of study, an enterprise whose prospects of success were greatly compromised because it was set up on too narrow a basis. Today many schools, freed from any predetermined outside pattern imposed upon them, are discovering how to plan the whole range of their cor-

porate life and activities by the coöperative working of their entire staffs.

To us in music this comes as a challenge and an opportunity. It is not merely that we must be alert to stand up for our rights and special interests. We have something to give our colleagues and the institutions which we serve as a whole. We have something to say about how human education as a whole should be conducted; and in finding out how to say it best and most convincingly we shall come to see the possibilities of our own work with deeper insight and greater completeness. The ideal musician is a good educator, just as any educator who ignores the power and significance of music has not only a blind spot but a whole blind side, if not two of them. So, if we wish to inherit the future, we must resist the temptation toward a narrow specialism, and we must be ready to learn better and better how to play our part in the drama of a more exacting type of educational coöperation and planning which the coming years will demand of us.

Fourth Proposition

American education, throughout its entire scope, must envisage a central and intelligible goal, a determining focus of purpose—the formation of the democratic character and the promotion of the democratic ideal of human society and human life.

Many a child, many an adolescent, many a young adult who goes to school in democratic America could give no very common-sense, direct, or tangible answer as to why he is there, and what it is for which the institution stands. No child who goes to school in either Soviet Russia or Nazi Germany can long remain in the least doubt. There is no need for dubious and fine-spun theories about the training of the mind, or for excuses on behalf of this subject or that as of possible practical value. The meaning and purpose of education are unmistakable. One need not be a professional educator to discern them. They are so manifest that he who runs cannot fail to read. A certain type of character, a certain way of life, a certain ideal of loyalty is set up. It is not merely preached on a few occasions, but woven into the texture of education down to its smallest details. The schools choose their content and organize their procedures to realize and produce it. They tolerate no countervailing influences. There is no ambiguity at all. The ideal is treated as the primary concern, of most commanding importance. The schools envisage a driving and definite purpose, and hew to the line with wholehearted realism. They know what they want, and they set out to get it.

Now I submit to you that we in America should do the same. We should define our goal. We should say what we want, and set out to get it. As a matter of fact we are well aware of what our purpose must be, but it has not been brought convincingly into relationship with our educational procedures. Going to school in America should mean acquiring the qualities of mind and heart, the intellectual, moral, emotional, and social dispositions which fit men and women for the uses of freedom. This controlling purpose should be so obvious that anyone can recognize it. It should be woven so realistically into the texture of our procedures, should be so manifestly the activating force of the enterprise,

that even the youngest child cannot miss it. He should be aware that when he goes to school he is not going there to be subjected to what seems to him a pointless routine devised by adults for what ends he cannot tell. He should know, his parents should know, the public should know, his teachers should know, that when he goes to school he goes there to learn how to be a free human being.

There is nothing Utopian about this proposal. It is in line with the whole meaning of our lives in these tremendous days. And it can be done. Other systems of education in other lands and other ages have centered upon an ideal goal such as this, have built their work around it, and have exercised enormous creative influence. Ours can too. The human problem of American education is fabulously complex, and uniformity is utterly impossible. We must deal with the tough adolescents of New York's East Side, with the decorous children of Middletown, with Negro young people in the rural South, with the privileged youngsters of Chicago's North Shore, with youth who cannot find a job, with the offspring of professional classes headed for college, and with many, many more various types and groups. To ask what core of subject matter all these infinite varieties of human creatures should study in common is a hopeless question. They must be educated in relationship to the lives they live and the opportunities and limitations they face. So far there is sheer diversity. But still there should and can be one great uniformity. When all these endlessly varied human beings go to school, they should enter into experiences and be brought within the range of compelling, consistent, deliberately planned influences which bring home to them with convincing force and in the most realistic form the great ideal for which our nation stands—the democratic ideal itself. This should penetrate all the education they receive, and ramify throughout every subject taught and every procedure followed in the institutions they attend.

Once more I submit to you that in a democratically oriented and aimed education music can have a major part to play. Partly this is because of the extraordinary universality of its appeal and the diverse uses to which it can be put. Music is one of those elements of human culture which really can reach and powerfully affect almost everybody, from the potential gangster to the potential saint, from the ill-nourished child of the Southern cotton picker to the wealthy scion of Oak Park, Illinois. It has a prodigious natural penetrating power. But also music is particularly adaptable to the uses of a democratic education because it can provide experiences so rich and convincing of what free and orderly association and dealing with one's fellows really means.

Here you can see what teaching music in terms of the democratic ideal really means. It does not merely mean a hospitable repertoire—one which includes the works of Mendelssohn, Wagner, Verdi, and Shostakovich. It means making the whole teaching and learning of the art rich with the human values of freedom. It means abandoning the Fascist-like routines of the professional symphony orchestra in our high-school instrumental programs and substituting something more worthy of a democratic education. It means making the

group performance of music an experience of true co-operative endeavor, to which everyone makes his own individual contribution in a spirit of ordered freedom. It means making our music periods and our music classes experiences in which each individual finds opportunities for his own initiative and encouragement to display it, and yet uses it for the benefit of all. It means providing chances for special skill and talent to exhibit themselves, not for display, but for the pleasure of others and for the encouragement of such skill and talent. It means leading our children and young people to wish to share the pleasure they find in the art, and the skill in it which they develop, just as widely as possible both in and out of the school. It means, in summary, that the music program should stand, above everything else, for a free, happy, humane association of people, young and old, who rejoice in one another's successes, who bear with and seek to relieve one an-

other's weaknesses, and whose experience in working together with the art is transposed into an association for which the only adequate name is friendship.

The music program in your school can be a potent instrumentality on behalf of the democratic ideal. It can become so on condition that it is permeated in every fibre with the spirit of freedom, the spirit of achievement with and for others, the spirit of brotherhood. Then the young people entrusted to your care will not be learning music only. They will be learning at the same time how to live as free people should in a free world. The work you carry on will be saturated and activated by the commanding ideal for whose triumph we are now at war. Never fear but that artistic outcomes will be added unto you likewise. Here is the inspiring potential of the enterprise this Conference represents. If we fulfill it, we shall most surely and fully possess our inheritance in the future years.