

## OUR MUSIC APPRECIATION

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In an article on 'The Place of Music in Education' in the *Parents' Review* of August 1904, F. V. Niecks quotes Plato: 'Music training is a more potent instrument than any other because rhythm and melody find their way into the secret places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace.' He goes on to say that music *is capable of being made* a powerful factor in education as well in the sphere of manners and morals as in the cultivation of the ear and the possible attainment of skill on an instrument. He believed that informal training—'no more than assisted natural development'—could not begin too early and that singing was the only sound foundation of a musical education.

Charlotte Mason held that the child should be brought into touch with as many interests as possible—'Education is the science of relations'—and Music was one of these. In her Parents' Review School, a course of singing was always set, but in January, 1905, there was a big step forward and we read the following note by Mrs. Howard-Glover under 'Our Work':

'In order to complete the scheme of musical education already set forth in the syllabus of the Parents' Review School, it is proposed to publish quarterly in this magazine a list of six pieces, with which the pupil is to become not only acquainted but familiar during the term.

'The execution of music, and practice in the technique of the art, is only one side of a musical training. It is also necessary to train the ear to an understanding of the classics, in order that a child may enter into the heritage which genius has bequeathed to him; in order, too, that he should understand and love the literature of music, in the same way that we try to imbue him with an appreciation of all the great masterpieces of writers and painters.

'With this end in view, it is suggested that during the coming three months, the teacher, parent, or any available friend, should play the following compositions to the children, beginning with one movement if necessary, and gradually extending the repertoire, until they become well-known and loved. If no executant is at hand, the services of a pianola need not be disdained, although, of course, it must be regarded as a second-best.

'A daily musical half-hour of this nature will be found to awaken keen musical enthusiasm in the children, even in those who have shown no aptitude in their music lessons, and the idea of music will be lifted

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above the drudgery which is inseparable from the practice of technical difficulties.

'A clever teacher will further make use of this opportunity for hints on musical form and musical history, as brought out and illustrated in what is being played. The pieces selected this month do not present any great difficulty, and might be studied and performed by the more advanced pupils themselves:

Handel—'The Harmonious Blacksmith'

Beethoven—'Sonata Op. 26'

Schubert—‘Du bist die Rüh’  
Liszt’s or pianoforte transcription of the same  
Schumann—‘Arabesque Op. 18’  
Chopin—‘Prelude Op. 28, No. 17’  
Sinding—‘Frühlingsrauschen’

This is what we mean by ‘Music Appreciation’ in our Parents’ Union School and it could well be read and re-read by all of us. A daily musical half-hour is an ideal probably attained by few—though I do know of some schools who manage it—but even a weekly half-hour spent in concentrated listening helps to build up a store of treasures. Very little talk is needed before a first hearing; experience teaches just how much, but in the same way that we allow a present or a beautiful picture to be enjoyed without explanations at first, so we should anticipate the first hearing of music as little as possible. Afterwards come the direction of attention to the ‘beauties of form and the characters of expression . . . Simple music calls only for simple explanations . . . and by such explanations the lessons are made more interesting,’ to quote F. V. Niecks once more. In these days of wonderful recordings and miniature scores, the sound of the individual instruments can also be learnt very readily.

In the autumn of 1908, it was proposed to study *one* great composer each term, beginning with Handel. Sir Hubert Parry’s *Studies of Great Composers* and Mrs. Emma [sic] Marshall’s *The Master of the Musicians* were recommended, and also various albums from which pieces or songs were to be selected. Since then it has been the practice to study one composer per term, by which means a child at the end of a normal school life will be familiar with some of the music of about twenty composers. In 1926 a gramophone club was formed and was found most helpful. The parcel of records was looked forward to eagerly, particularly by those in home schoolrooms in the country.

At the Charlotte Mason College we also follow this plan of hearing particularly the music of one composer each term, for half an hour a week. In fact ‘Music on Friday’ has been such a tradition—since the early 1920’s—that when it had, for time-table reasons, to be transferred to Wednesday for one term recently, neither Wednesday nor Friday seemed to be in their proper place in the week. Students with little previous knowledge of music have frequently said that it was through these weekly half-hours that they came to love it; and those with more musical training have increased their powers of listening. Real listening is no passive affair but requires complete attention if it is to yield its proper fruit: knowledge and joy. Only so can we enter into our ‘heritage.’