

# Musical Development of the Child

## Coraine Streyle

Teaching through playing is not substitute for the patient, rigorous individual training that must go on if a child is to become a competent instrumentalist. So many learning processes and so many delicate and complex coordinations are involved in the first piano lesson that it is little wonder that children soon become discouraged. If, however, the child's first musical experiences are joyful, if in his musical play his rhythmic, aural and muscular responses are quickened, the child with these fundamentals, can go wherever his musical instincts lead him, with the security of a firm foundation.

The basic fundamentals are developed in the kindergarten and the first grade. The program with emphasis on the fun and beauty of music includes: singing, listening, responding, and creating.

Music is preeminently a means of glorifying God. This is best done and most gloriously accomplished through words. This can, however, be also done by instrumentation.

The music education of every child should begin with singing. It is the natural medium for self-expression. Therefore, music educators should be concerned first with the voice – the instrument of song. The tone quality of the child must be considered although the child should not be conscious of it. If the desire to express the beauty of music is awakened in the children, if they are reminded of the thought in each song, and if they are aware of the importance of interpreting that thought, the light, high quality will come naturally. Good posture cannot be overemphasized, whether sitting or standing.

The general method for teaching singing is done by rote singing. The following are two methods for teaching the rote song: the whole song method and the phrase method. The whole song method is more accepted.

Rhythm band work is working with simple percussion instruments, such as drums, rhythm sticks, sand blocks and triangles. This is something that is begun in the kindergarten and the first grade and should result in a greater appreciation of music.

Every lesson of the listening program should be one of appreciation. There are a number of ways to develop appreciation, two of the best being singing and listening to much good music.

One can introduce the listening program by playing restful music while resting, listening to songs and records dealing with things familiar to the child's experiences, and listening occasionally to songs in singing class.

There are many schools where the facilities are such that the children have an opportunity to hear and observe bands and orchestras of older children and adults. When this is true, the study of the instruments of the band and orchestra may be begun at a very early age.

Listening to music with contrasting moods is an approach to the listening program. Lullabies and marches, weather, nature, birds, and animals; story telling music; and contrasts of major and minor moods are a means of music contrasts.

Every normal child has native rhythmic responses. Some children need a great deal of encouragement and help and it is the responsibility of the teacher to assist each child to respond to a wide variety of rhythmic activities.

It is very important that this phase of rhythms be very well established, for an ability to respond accurately to them will facilitate the rhythmic approach to reading readiness of music which will come later.

Walking, running, skipping, hopping, jumping, galloping, swinging, and swaying, are all forms of fundamental rhythms. Singing games also help the rhythmic responses.

Creative experiences enter into every lesson, if in no other way, through recreating a known song. Little children are creating when they can sing a song beautifully. They may also create their own musical instruments. Making up songs should be a regular part of the music program. Little children are very free in making up their own song. They often hum their own tunes at play or work.

The above are the four main emphases on the music program in the elementary school. Before music reading is presented, it is will to keep in mind that all of the activities begun and carried on the kindergarten and first grade will be continued and enlarged upon. The program should be varied to meet the needs and moods of children.

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