

Register 18/7/21

MUSIC CONFERENCE.

AURAL TRAINING.

The final lecture of the series delivered during the Music Teachers' Conference was a most interesting one upon "Aural culture" given by Miss Agnes Sterry at the Elder Conservatorium on Saturday morning. It was illustrated by a demonstration of actual work by pupils of two grades, who gave striking evidence of the possibilities of the system. In introducing the speaker, Dr. Harold Davies stressed the value of such training, and the remarkably fine work Miss Sterry was doing.

—Beauties of Musical Language.—

Miss Sterry said the aim of the aural class was to throw open the doors of music as wide as possible, and to reveal some of the beauties of musical language, apart from the child's struggling efforts on some instrument. The ideal age to begin training was when the child was in the kindergarten, so that he or she had a real and personal interest in music before the technical difficulties of an instrument were thought of. To the child of seven at a piano, with legs dangling, before a number of black and white things which looked dreadfully alike, and a book which the teacher called "the music," though it was like any other book, except that there were dots, it needed much mental effort to grasp what was meant. On the other hand, if the child was asked to listen to the music and march or run or skip just as the music told him, he found that the time of the music was a real live thing; it became part of his very being. The tunes he played on Nature's instrument, the voice, became a joy and delight. Children taught on those lines went to their first piano lesson with a good sense of time and rhythm, and some knowledge of what music really was, in fact. After that the class and instrumental lessons went on hand in hand. In the elementary stage choral work and ear training was studied together, but, later on, it was best to divide the class into two parts—the aural culture and the choral class. The latter included the teaching of elementary voice production, diction, and singing of unison and part songs, and so on. The subjects of the choral class did not come within the scope of the lecture, but the class ran in conjunction with aural culture, the objects of which were practical and aesthetic. Probably many of them were acquainted with much of the practical side, as the method was based upon the tonic sol-fa. The ear was trained to recognise differences in pitch, duration, and quality of sound; and through the ear the eye learned to recognise from notation what sounds were required, and the children could then produce them through the voice. In the elementary stages time and pitch were taught as separate subjects. Later the two were combined.

—The Most Important Thing.—

The first and perhaps the most important thing to instil into the pupil's mind was the sense of regular pulsation in all music. Most children had a strong sense of time and rhythm at an early age, but when that sense was left uncultivated it often seemed to disappear. As soon as children could recognise pulse with ease, they were encouraged to listen for accent, and to recognise that accent was also regular and measured out the music into little groups of two, three, or four, as the case might be. Parallel with the rhythmic training the children were told the difference in pitch of certain sounds. At first they learned to use their voices by singing nursery rhymes, and so on; but they were soon able to recognise that all tunes wanted to end on a certain sound, named "doh." Gradually the other sounds of the scale were introduced, each having its own character. There were various ways of introducing these sounds of the scale, but the most charming was through special songs arranged for the purpose. Miss Sterry sang a charming setting of "Little Boy Blue" on two sounds only. She went on to illustrate aural culture in its various branches in three different grades, kindergarten, intermediate, and advanced. The first two grades, she said, would be demonstrated by two classes of children. In the third grade she would give illustrations from the work of older girls. The most advanced examples would show how the aural class led on to harmony, transposition, and composition.

—A Demonstration.—

A charming little class of boys and girls, aged from four to six years, appeared. None of the work had been prepared, and they had never demonstrated before, but the preliminary class responded to the tests in a manner which suggested something of magic. "Pulse" was illustrated by a march in varying time. Accent was demonstrated by clapping, slow beating, and a sort of musical-chair game, in which the tiny tots marched for 4 time, sat down for 5 time, and stood still for 3. Pitch was illustrated by the singing of nursery rhymes. Originality and the recognition of

character and shape in music were also demonstrated. Of the older class, Miss Sterry said that she wished it to be remembered that it was a complete class, not picked children. The lesson consisted of an hour a week for 30 weeks a year; but, as half the time went in choral singing, really 15 hours a year was all that really went to aural training. The whole training was based on relative pitch, but absolute pitch was inculcated as far as possible. At the beginning of every lesson she sounded C from the tuning fork, which the children sang and followed it by the scale of C. In that way they became accustomed to a certain standard of sound and could judge other sounds by relative pitch. Varied phases of aural training were demonstrated, including sight-reading, ear tests, transposition, stepping a scale, and use of the French time names. Some of the rhythmic exercises were difficult as well as charming, the hands and feet marking time and rhythm or the character of the music. Examples of composition by an older class showed that Miss Sterry had cause for her belief that the power of original song could be developed. In appreciation work she said that she felt strongly that it was not a question of how much knowledge could be crammed into the heads of children, but how best to present good music to them so that they would love it. At the conclusion of the demonstration Dr. Davies said that he was infinitely grateful to Miss Sterry for her illustration of what was possible in the development of faculty, proving music to be a language to which children of four responded.

—Dr. Davies Thanked.—

Briefly, but emphatically, Mr. L. Puddy spoke of the time and thought given by Dr. Davies to the conference. He moved the following resolution:—"We, the members of the conference of music teachers, most heartily thank Professor E. Harold Davies, Mus. Doc. (Director of the Elder Conservatorium of music) for arranging and conducting the conference. We greatly appreciate all that he has said and done towards making it a success. We also ask Professor Davies to convey our thanks to all who have in various ways assisted him." Dr. Ruby Davy seconded the motion, which was carried with enthusiasm.

Advertiser 18/7/21

MUSIC TEACHERS.

ADDRESS BY MISS STERRY.

END OF THE CONFERENCE.

On Saturday morning the conference of music teachers, which has been in session for a week, was brought to a close by a lecture and demonstration on "Aural Culture" by Miss Agnes Sterry. The system of Jacques Dalerose has won in Europe wide recognition as a natural and wonderfully efficient means of developing the sense of rhythm and defined sound, together with other elements essential to musical understanding. How splendidly this method is adapted to the training of young children was apparent in a number of demonstrations given by Miss Sterry with classes of pupils. The first group consisted of about ten, all under the age of seven years. To realise how almost instinctively they respond to the several suggestions it is necessary to be an eyewitness. One of the spectators referred to the results as being marvellous. It was explained that the object of the aural class was twofold—first, practical and then aesthetic. The practical exercises were designed to teach the recognition of music through the ear and to train the children to sing at sight. The aesthetic instruction aimed at cultivating the imagination, the appreciation of good music, originality, and the power of musical interpretation. In introducing the lecturer Professor Davies, Mus. Doc., who presided, referred to the splendid work Miss Sterry had been doing. He was sure her lecture and illustrations would interest the conference greatly. The method was to impart true education, namely, the development of faculties. Instruction was not necessarily education, although it helped largely to that end, but development of the faculties was the important thing. (Applause.)

Aural Culture Explained.

Before proceeding to the demonstrations Miss Sterry said the aim of the aural class was to throw open the doors of music as wide as possible, and to reveal some of the beauties of musical language to the child apart from his struggling efforts on some instrument. The ideal age to begin training was when the little one was in the kindergarten, so that he might have a real and personal interest in music before



Mr. F. L. Gratton, Supervisor of Music for the Department of Education, who delivered an address at the Music Teachers' Conference on Friday.

the technical difficulties of an instrument were thought of. To the child of seven at a piano with legs dangling a number of black and white things (the keyboard), which looked dreadfully alike and a book which the teacher called "the music," it needed much mental effort to grasp what was meant. On the other hand, if the child was asked to listen to the music and march or run or skip just as it told him he found the task easy. The tempo of the music was a real live thing, and it became part of his very being. The tunes he played on nature's instrument (the voice) became a joy and delight. Children taught on those lines came to their first piano lesson with a good sense of time and rhythm, and some knowledge of what music really was. After this initial stage the class and instrumental lessons went on hand in hand. In the elementary stage choral work and ear training were studied together, but later on it was best to divide the class into two parts—aural culture and choral class. The latter included the teaching of elementary voice-production, diction, and singing of unison and part-songs, &c. The subjects of the choral class did not come within the scope of that lecture, but the class was run in conjunction with aural culture, the objects of which were practical and aesthetic. Probably many of them were acquainted with much of the practical side, as the method was based upon the tonic sol-fa method. The ear was trained to recognise differences in pitch, duration, and quality of sound, and through the ear the eye learned to recognise from notation what sounds were required, and the pupil could then produce them through the voice. In the elementary stages time and pitch were taught as separate subjects. Later the two were combined. The first, and perhaps the most important, thing to instil into the pupil's mind was the sense of regular pulsation in all music. Most children had a strong sense of time and rhythm at an early age, but when that sense was left uncultivated it often seemed to disappear. As soon as children could recognise pulse with ease they were encouraged to listen for accent, and to recognise that accent was also regular and measured out the music into little groups of two, three, or four, as the case might be. Parallel with the rhythmic training the children were told the difference in the pitches of certain sounds. At first they learnt to use their voices by singing nursery rhymes, &c., but they were soon able to understand that all tunes wanted to end on a certain sound, named "Doh." Gradually the other sounds of the scale were introduced, each having its own characteristic. The children's first lesson in definite relative pitch was given through special songs arranged for the purpose, and thus pitch became associated with a beautiful song. Miss Sterry then dealt with aural culture in its various branches in three different grades—kindergarten, intermediate, and advanced. The first two grades were demonstrated by two classes of children. In the third grade she gave illustrations from the work of the older girls. The most advanced examples were designed to show how the aural class led on to harmony, transposition, and composition.

Interesting Illustrations.

Some interesting examples of the application of the system followed. With a class of children five and six years of age, Miss Sterry showed how naturally little ones feel the sense of pulse by allowing them to respond spontaneously in marching and physical exercises to the rhythmic sounds on the piano. Then the feeling of accent was illustrated by arm exercises to the beating of time, the children changing their actions as the beating was varied.

issue, the public would learn to distinguish between the certain guarantee of fitness in those on the list and the very uncertain—however loudly proclaimed—competency of unregistered practitioners.

At the conclusion of Mr. Mitchell's paper discussion took place. The following resolution, proposed by Mr. Brewster Jones, and seconded by Capt. King, was adopted:—"That this conference of music teachers affirms the desirableness of closer association for the purpose of furthering the matter of registration and other interests of teachers of music, and that a committee be formed for this purpose." The following were nominated as a provisional committee:—Mr. Brewster Jones, Mr. W. H. Foote, A.R.C.M., Dr. Ruby Davy, Miss Angelita Davis, Mus. Bac., Miss E. Williams, Mus. Bac., Capt. King, and Miss Agnes Sterry. Another resolution was—"That the tonic sol-fa system should be applied at the earliest possible opportunity to the staff notation."

—Miss Whittington's Recital.—

The last and eighth recital of the remarkable musical feast in connection with the music teachers' conference was a particularly charming violin recital by Miss Sylvia Whittington, A.M.U.A., accompanied by Mr. George Pearce. Miss Whittington was at her very best, and her playing gave the keenest pleasure. In Handel's "Sonata in D major" the pure quality of tone was noticeable. It was rendered throughout with expression and a just sense of proportion, and contrast. Mendelssohn's "Concerto for Violin, E minor, Op. 64," was yet another example of musicianly treatment. Miss Whittington's playing of the fine opening movement, "Largo Maestoso," indeed of the whole writing, was delightful. There followed the "Allegretto" (Bocherini-Kreisler), with an old-world quaintness. "Skellione" (Bach-Auer), the descriptive and emotional "Serenade" (Perzement), and the haunting "Berceuse" (Melartin), given with charming effect. "Tambourin Chinois" (Kreisler) was the concluding number of a thoroughly successful and artistic recital.

Advertiser 16/7/21

A MUSIC TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.

One of the practical results of the conference of music teachers, which, at the invitation of Dr. Harold Davies, has been in session at the Elder Conservatorium during this week, and which will be brought to a close to-day, has been the decision to form a society with the object of endeavoring to secure the registration of music teachers, and in other ways to safeguard their interests. Something of the sort was attempted a few years ago, but it was felt that the time was now opportune again to devise means for improving the status of the profession, and providing for the public and young students the means of knowing whether or not teachers possessed valid qualifications for their work. These are the days of associations, and Dr. Davies, in his address to the teachers, laid stress on the importance of the recognition of the ethics as well as the advantages of association. Naturally there was a strong desire that he should be closely identified with the movement, and he was asked to allow his name to be placed on the committee. This, however, he courteously but firmly declined to do, explaining that he could not add to his many duties any further administrative responsibilities. He assured them of his cordial sympathy and intimated that he would always be ready and pleased to do anything he could to assist them. The hope was freely expressed that the conference would become an annual institution.

Register 18/7/21

MUSICAL EXAMINATIONS.

In opening the discussion on the question of "Registration of Music Teachers" at last Friday afternoon's session of the Conference, Professor Harold Davies remarked that, among other advantages, registration would define clearly the qualifications which were valid, as well as those which were invalid. There were some examining bodies from overseas operating in Australia, he said, whose certificates were without authority. Professor Davies pointed out that the Universities worked under a Royal Charter, and that their musical examinations were in consequence authoritative; and, further, that the Royal College and Royal Academy were also chartered institutions. Trinity College, though not chartered, was affiliated with the University of London, but all other agencies should be viewed with suspicion.